

London and the Irish Community in
Britain in Dónall Mac Amhlaigh's
Exiles

Niamh MacGloin

MA By Research

University of York

English and Related Literature

April 2026

Abstract

Deoraithe/Exiles (1986/trans.2020 by Mícheál Ó hAodha) was Dónall Mac Amhlaigh's last novel, centred on the theme of Irish migration to Britain, and rooted deeply in his own personal experiences. The novel, set in 1950, is ambivalent about migration itself, although Mac Amhlaigh is critical of the conditions in Ireland that have historically driven young people to leave. I focus on two of the three protagonists in *Deoraithe/Exiles*: Nano, who first moves to Britain at the beginning of the book, and Trevor, who returns on the same boat after visiting his wife and family in Galway. The characters who have emigrated to Britain accept the opportunities and freedom they gain, whilst still suffering the anxiety of forging a new identity in exile. Liam Harte recognises as '[o]ne of the central tropes in literary representations of the Irish in England [...] the dialectical tension between adherence to a fixed originary identity and the evolution of a flexible, contingent migrant identity.'¹ The two characters exemplify this trope, each inhabiting one of the two methods of forging identity in their exile. Rather than offering a critique of migration, this thesis argues that Mac Amhlaigh presents his understanding of this tension, reflecting on his own experience of emigration, to develop the argument that embracing a 'flexible, contingent migrant identity' is the more fulfilling path for the Irish in Britain.

¹ Liam Harte, "'You Want to be a British Paddy?': The Anxiety of Identity in Post-War Irish Migrant Writing' in *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s*, ed. Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea, Carmel Quinlan (Mercier Press, 2004), 234.

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Contents

Abstract	1
Introduction.....	4
Chapter 1-‘And if he’d been able, he’d have memorised and recorded every single word and gesture of these people’: <i>Exiles</i> , Between Fact and Fiction.....	15
Chapter 2-‘Free from the ties of home and family’: Irish-Speaking Labour in London.	32
Chapter 3-‘Somehow, Nano felt like she’d come home.’: The Irish, Among Other Immigrant Communities.	50
Conclusion.....	69
Works consulted	72

Introduction

Deoraithe (1986), posthumously translated as *Exiles* in 2020 by Mícheál Ó hAodha, was Dónall Mac Amhlaigh's final novel. It consolidated a vast and varied body of work by Mac Amhlaigh, often exploring the Irish working-class community in Britain and, significantly, in London. This thesis documents the ambivalent perspective of Irish migration to Britain in the 1950s, presented in *Exiles*. Mac Amhlaigh's stance on the politics of Irish migration in the mid-twentieth century is clear in the novel: he is critical of the economic conditions that caused it and their effects, particularly on the preservation of the Irish language. He is not, however, critical of the emigrants themselves and, in fact, emphasises the necessity of the move for many of those who 'took the boat' in this era. Throughout this thesis, I trace how the characters in *Exiles* living in Britain feel equally ambivalent about their own positions, enjoying the freedoms that come with emigrating while suffering the anxiety of displacement and exile. My argument builds on Tom Herron's introduction to *Irish Writing London*, which highlights the same ambivalence:

Alongside discrimination and poor living conditions, there is pleasure and opportunity to be found in London. Continuing that tradition of settlement that established itself most firmly in the nineteenth century, tens of thousands of Irish people forged and fashioned new lives for themselves in the city. And [...], for the writers it is almost always a place of ambivalence.²

Herron goes on to state that: 'Nowhere is this ambivalence more vividly registered' than in Mac Amhlaigh's earlier novel *Dialann Deoraí*, based on the writer's own diaries, which shares the same focus on mid-century Irish migration to Britain as *Exiles*. *Dialann Deoraí*, translated into *An Irish Navy: Diary of an Exile* in 1964 by Valentin Iremonger, has been more visible in discussions of Irish writing about Britain.

Focusing instead on *Exiles*, I document how Mac Amhlaigh's writing grapples with the paradox that a life in Britain can be preferable to life at home. The novel shows how emigration can offer greater freedom and more opportunities for work while simultaneously highlighting that the displaced Irish remain exploited, marginalised, and invisible in Britain. Indeed, in the first chapter of *Exiles*, Mac Amhlaigh tells us that 'people were getting chances now that they'd

² Tom Herron, 'Introduction,' in *Irish Writing London: Volume 2: Post-War to the Present*, ed. Tom Herron (Bloomsbury, 2014), 18.

never got before and they had to grab them with both hands,³ but not without the caveat that ‘oh! There was big money to be made over there, alright ... no word of a lie. That said, they worked ferociously long hours for it, the Mayo women and the Donegal women, especially.’⁴ I show that the critique in *Exiles* is not about the act of migration; rather, it is about how to build a life in Britain. Mac Amhlaigh highlights the naivety of those who insist on living in insular, homogeneous worlds, who interact only with others in the Irish community and, as a result, limit their chances to learn from others. In contrast to this insularity, Mac Amhlaigh encourages the Irish community in Britain to expand its network and to appreciate and celebrate its similarities with other post-war immigrant communities in the country.

Exiles is written as a triptych, with two male protagonists and one female protagonist. Their stories are nearly entirely separate, their paths crossing briefly at the novel’s beginning: on the train journey from Galway to Dublin. The novel explores Irish migration to Britain through characters based in both Ireland and Britain. Its three protagonists are: Niall O’Connell (Niall Ó Conaill in *Deoraithe*), who has just left *An Chéad Chathlán Coisithe* and returned to his family in Kilkenny in Ireland,⁵ Nano Keane (Nano Ní Chatháin), an independent-minded nurse who works in the fictional town of ‘Norwold’⁶ in the south of England, and the labourer Trevor Nee (Treabhar O’Nia), who lives in London. The associations between the protagonists and Mac Amhlaigh’s own life mean that many cross-overs and influences are present between *Exiles* and *An Irish Navy*. Mac Amhlaigh’s diaries, archived at the National Library of Ireland, provide insightful material on both his own life in Britain and on the development of *Deoraithe*. I will draw on these diaries in this thesis. I also use Mac Amhlaigh’s literary notebooks, which are archived with his diaries and are largely undated, as well as selected elements from his prolific journalistic output, which offers us crucial insight into his understanding of the Irish community in Britain.

In his exploration of the anxiety of identity in post-war migrant literature, Liam Harte highlights as ‘[o]ne of the central tropes in literary representations of the Irish in England [...] the dialectical tension between adherence to a fixed originary identity and the evolution of a flexible, contingent migrant identity.’ He recognises that ‘the themes of identity articulation and

³ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, trans. Mícheál Ó hAodha (Parthian, 2020), 14.

⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 14.

⁵ The Irish-speaking First Battalion of the Irish Army.

⁶ I have assumed, based on context such as Norwold having shoe-making factories, that Nano’s home is a fictionalised version of Mac Amhlaigh’s British hometown of Northampton, where he first moved to work as a hospital orderly.

negotiation occupy a dominant place in twentieth-century representations of the Irish migrant experience in England.⁷ Harte also understands that:

In postcolonial Irish migration narratives, therefore, England is more than a phenomenologically constituted material world; it is also a symbolic site of identity negotiation, where the migrant subject must forge a new imaginative relationship with his or her world to exist fully.⁸

I will show that, in *Exiles*, the characters' complexity lies in their resistance to or acceptance of this negotiation and in the subsequent adaptation of their Irish identity. I examine two of the three protagonists in particular: Nano, who first moves to Britain at the beginning of the book, and Trevor, who returns on the same boat after visiting home. These characters are my focus, as they have already emigrated to Britain. I refer to the third protagonist, Niall, in specific contexts to explore how his life in Ireland contrasts with the experiences of the characters who have emigrated. The two characters I centre exemplify the trope Harte highlights: each inhabits one of these two methods of forging identity in their exile. I explore how Mac Amhlaigh uses Trevor, his navy character, to reflect upon and emphasise the complexity of what being Irish in London meant in the post-war era, trying to hold on to this 'fixed originary identity' which ultimately is in constant flux as long as the navy insists on maintaining it whilst living in the city.⁹ Additionally, I demonstrate how Mac Amhlaigh uses Nano, the nurse, who is more willing to embrace her 'flexible, contingent migrant identity,' to illustrate how Irish emigrants could forge new social connections in their displacement. In line with Harte's assessment, Mac Amhlaigh's Britain is, indeed, a site of identity negotiation. While Trevor's resistance to forging a 'new imaginative relationship' with his identity in many ways keeps him stuck, Nano's flexibility allows her to achieve this fuller existence.

Trevor sees London, where he lives, through the eyes of a navy; he recognises the invisible labour that has gone into rebuilding the city in the aftermath of the Second World War. There are many moments where London is explored through the lens of labour and building:

This was the era of reconstruction and expansion, and tall buildings were appearing everywhere where there'd been massive bomb craters just recently. The arteries and

⁷ Harte, "You Want to be a British Paddy?," 235.

⁸ Harte, "You Want to be a British Paddy?," 234.

⁹ The term 'navvy' is taken from the word 'navigator' due to their associations with building canals, tunnels and roads.

sinews of all the big cities were being revived, and everywhere was a cacophony of noise as people threw themselves into the huge project of reconstruction. The Irish were to be found in large numbers wherever the highest pay was available.¹⁰

The vitality of the city is directly linked to this immigrant labour. The ambitious Irish immigrants become the lifeblood of the city, emphasising this sense of revival in the period after World War II. Mac Amhlaigh highlights the significance of this mid-century moment in history for both Ireland and Britain – a time when England needed immigrant labour to rebuild, and when Ireland was struggling to adapt and to support its young people in the aftermath of independence.¹¹ The novel contrasts the sense of stagnation in Ireland, most fully explored through Niall's struggles to find work, with the sense of revitalisation and progress in Britain. Mac Amhlaigh still makes it explicit that opportunities in Britain are directly as a result of war, stating that: 'The war had been long and brutal but at least a lot of work had become necessary in its aftermath,'¹² and referencing jokes made by Irish labourers ('It was Adolf who made a real country of her.').¹³ The need for workers in England is once again emphasised in Chapter 10:

England was starting to really blossom and develop again economically, especially in those cities destroyed in the Blitz. The country was being rebuilt again gradually and with all this renovation came a tremendous amount of work – gasworks, water schemes, electricity – everything that was needed to get the country up and running again. There was so much re-building work happening, and of course there was no better man for this type of work than the Irishman [...]. There was a ton of work available by then and there were few jobs that the Irish weren't at the front of the queue for – even if you still saw the odd advertisement here and there banning them from certain jobs or lodgings.¹⁴

The same sense of fervour and anticipation is present here, although Mac Amhlaigh also hints at another aspect of life for the Irish in Britain, the prejudice they faced. He alludes to a shift in the

¹⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 28-29.

¹¹ Donald Harman Akenson, 'Great Britain: The Place Nearest Home,' in *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (The Institute of Irish Studies, University of Belfast, 1996); Tracey Connolly, 'Emigration from Ireland to Britain During the Second World War,' in *The Irish Diaspora*, ed. Andy Bielenberg (Pearson Education, 2000); Enda Delaney, 'Placing Postwar Irish Migration to Britain in a Comparative European Perspective, 1945-1981,' in *The Irish Diaspora*, ed. Andy Bielenberg (Pearson Education, 2000); Joe Cleary, 'Introduction,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, ed. Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (Cambridge University Press, 2005); Panikos Panayi, *Migrant City: A New History of London* (Yale University Press, 2020).

¹² Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 175.

¹³ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 175.

¹⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 175.

prevalence of this prejudice – that you ‘still’ saw ‘the odd’ anti-Irish sentiment. This aligns with sociological evidence that racial parameters in Britain adjusted with the arrival of immigrant workers from countries in South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. For the Irish, this resulted in a period of less direct prejudice but also an assumed assimilation, with similarities to the native British population being drawn on the grounds of visual sameness and thus ‘whiteness’ rather than cultural sameness.¹⁵

Critics such as Liam Harte, Tony Murray, Ellen McWilliams, Aidan Arrowsmith and Clair Wills have highlighted the importance of British-Irish emigrant narratives to Irish literature and culture, particularly working-class narratives.¹⁶ The relatively recent translation of *Exiles* into English means the novel has remained comparatively understudied in these contexts, although it resonates with contemporary critical interest in the connections between language, emigration and identity in Irish literature. Michael Pierse, David Convery, and other scholars who focus more broadly on Irish working-class literature have also offered insightful contexts for considering Mac Amhlaigh’s practice and some of the text’s influences.¹⁷ Scholars who focus on Irish-language literature, most notably Máirín Nic Eoin and Aisling Ní Dhonnchadha, have paid some critical attention to *Exiles* in its original form, *Deoraithe*. Nic Eoin and Ní Dhonnchadha’s work situates Mac Amhlaigh amongst a variety of modern Irish-language writers, highlighting how *Deoraithe* is in dialogue with works by other writers of his era, most significantly aligning him with Seosamh Mac Grianna. Nic Eoin also highlights *Deoraithe* as a modern Irish-language text written by a non-native speaking author and recognises the value of the novel in situating the Irish language in a global context.¹⁸ I aim to show how *Exiles* speaks to these important critical discourses and to bring the novel to light within the Anglophone Irish literary academic sphere.

Oona Frawley, as a scholar of both Irish postcolonial studies and Irish memory studies, defines cultural memory in a way that is important to my thesis: ‘a term [...] to describe

¹⁵ Mary J. Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity: The State, The Catholic Church and the Education of the Irish in Britain* (Ashgate, 1995); Rosalind Willis, ‘Where are the Irish in Research on Ethnic Health Inequalities in Britain? A State-Of-The-Art Literature Review,’ *Sociology of Health and Illness*, no.1 (2025).

¹⁶ Liam Harte, ‘Introduction: Migration and Autobiographical Authorship,’ in *The Literature of the Irish in Britain: Autobiography and Memoir, 1725-2001* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Harte, “‘You want to be a British Paddy?’”; Liam Harte, ‘Migrancy, Performativity And Autobiographical Identity,’ *Irish Studies Review* 14, no. 2 (2006): 225-38; Tom Herron, ed. *Irish Writing London: Volume 2: Post-War to the Present* (Bloomsbury, 2014); Ellen McWilliams, *Women and Exile in Contemporary Irish Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Tony Murray, *London Irish fictions: Narrative, Diaspora and Identity* (Liverpool University Press, 2014); Aidan Arrowsmith, ‘Inside-Out: Literature, Cultural Identity and Irish Migration to England,’ in *Comparing Postcolonial Literatures*, edited by Ashok Bery and Patricia Murray (Macmillan, 2000); Clair Wills, ‘Realism and the Irish Immigrant: Documentary, Fiction, and Postwar Irish Labor,’ *Modern Language Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2012).

¹⁷ See especially Michael Pierse, ed., *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹⁸ Aisling Ní Dhonnchadha and Máirín Nic Eoin, ‘Ar an gCoigrioch; Migration and Identity in Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Irish-Language Literature,’ *The Irish Review*, no.44 (2012): 60-74; Máirín Nic Eoin, ‘Litríocht Mhionlaigh Agus/Nó Litríocht Dhomhanda?’ *Comhar*, 75, no.2 (2015): 12-16; Máirín Nic Eoin, ‘Idir Dhá Chomhairle/ Between Two Minds: Interculturality in Literary Criticism in Irish,’ *Field Day Review* (2008): 216-223.

remembrance among social groups that manifests itself in multiple forms and relies upon acts of narration.¹⁹ In a reflective essay titled 'Documenting the Fifties,' published posthumously in 1989, Mac Amhlaigh emphasises this multiplicity. He expresses that his works 'are all set in and draw what inspiration they have from the condition of the ordinary Irish, mainly rural working-class people, among whom I have lived and worked since coming to Britain in the Spring of 1951,'²⁰ emphasising his dedicated focus on capturing the lives of the Irish working class in Britain. He goes on to appeal to fellow emigrant writer Edna O'Brien, stating:

Edna O'Brien who comes from the rural Ireland of small farmers and shopkeepers and whose novels and short stories have brought her well-deserved acclaim, could have written a great book about the country folk of her native Co. Clare, the life they created for themselves in the booming London of the 1950's and '60's – the construction labourers and entrepreneurs that came from their ranks, the girls and women who staffed hospitals, the ordinary Irish folk of a later period caught up in the backwash of Northern Ireland turbulence, the innocently convicted – and the guilty.²¹

Mac Amhlaigh's reflections foreground his interest in capturing his community and their experiences, narrating the memory of his social group. Where *An Irish Navy* was based in Mac Amhlaigh's diaries and focused on his own experiences of emigration, *Exiles* seeks to represent others from this community, most specifically the 'construction labourers' and 'the girls and women who staffed hospitals.'

The level of nuance in *Deoraithe* sets Mac Amhlaigh's work apart from anti-migration narratives and sentiment popular in the 1950s, as exemplified by Irish writers observing mass migration at home in their contemporary moment, particularly fellow Irish-language writers such as Máirtín Ó Cadhain, Dónal Foley, Joe Higgins, Ristéard de Paor and Diarmaid Ó Grainne, all identified as key figures by Máirín Nic Eoin and Aisling Ní Dhonnchadha.²² I believe the ambivalence in the novel differs from the popular sentiment associated with 1950s emigrants, as the text is retrospectively framed, set when the author emigrated to Britain himself, more than thirty years before it was published. Mac Amhlaigh's diaries indicate that the novel was developed over a long time: it was first drafted as a play with the same title and similarly named

¹⁹ Oona Frawley, 'Towards a Theory of Cultural Memory in an Irish Postcolonial Context,' in *Memory Ireland: History and Modernity*, vol.1, (Syracuse University Press, 2011), 18.

²⁰ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties,' *Irish Studies in Britain*, no.14 (1989), 8.

²¹ Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties,' 9.

²² Ní Dhonnchadha and Nic Eoin, 'Ar an gCoigríoch.'

characters in 1963, and was eventually published as a novel in the mid-1980s, in a new, much-changed era of Irish migration within an increasingly multicultural society.²³

Throughout the time Mac Amhlaigh was writing *Deoraithe*, from the mid-1970s until its first publication in 1986, parameters were shifting. Figures such as Seán Hutton, with the Federation of Irish Societies (now Irish in Britain), began to advocate for greater recognition of the Irish community by the British state in the latter decades of the twentieth century, ultimately resulting in the introduction of a separate Irish ethnicity on the census in 2001.²⁴ *Exiles* exists as an ambivalent and nuanced social realist novel in part due to the cultural shift undertaken in the latter half of the twentieth century, allowing literary emphasis to move from criticism of Irish migration to Britain to appreciating and celebrating the emigrants of the mid-century era through a text rooted in a strong sense of cultural memory.

Mac Amhlaigh made the crossing from Kilkenny himself in the year 1951 and settled in the southern English city of Northampton. He continued working as a navvy and labourer throughout his life, alongside a prolific career as a writer and journalist in both the British and Irish printed press. He regularly contributed to major newspapers such as *The Irish Times* and the British-Irish newspaper *The Irish Post*, as well as Irish-language magazines and papers, including *Amárach* in Galway, and *Inniú* and *Comhar* in Dublin. His journalism and short stories were published in English and as *Gaeilge*. Mac Amhlaigh is remembered culturally. In his lifetime, he won five *Oireachtas* awards, *Dialann Deoraí* featured in the Irish Leaving Certificate examinations, and he has been memorialised in Dublin's EPIC emigration museum and through the Gaelscoil Mhic Amhlaigh in his beloved Galway. His status as a working-class Irish language writer who spent most of his life in Britain means his work has historically been underrepresented in academia. *Exiles*, only published in translation in 2020, has yet to receive close critical attention in its own right.

Mac Amhlaigh's other texts include *Dialann Deoraí* (1960), an autofictionalised version of his diaries; *Saol Saighdiúra* (1962), a novel about his experiences in the Irish army; and *Schnitzer O Sé* (1974), a satirical self-parody of his experiences in Britain. Each of Mac Amhlaigh's major novels has been translated into English from the original Irish. *Dialann Deoraí* was translated into *An Irish Navy: Diary of an Exile* by Valentin Iremonger in 1964; Mícheál Ó hAodha was also responsible for the translation of *Saol Saighdiúra* into *A Soldier's Song* in 2023; and Mac Amhlaigh

²³ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *Diary*, 1963, manuscript, in Irish, MS 32,596/21, *Diaries and Literary Notebooks of Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 1950-1988*, National Library of Ireland.

²⁴ Gráinne O'Keeffe-Vigneron, 'The Irish in Multicultural London: The Fight for Recognition as the Other,' *Middle Ground: Journal of Literary and Cultural Encounters* 1, no. 1 (2007): 12-19.
Gráinne O'Keeffe, 'The 2001 Census To Tick or Not To Tick: The Existence of an Irish Ethnic Identity in England,' *Études Irlandaises* 31, no. 1 (2006): 169-181.

translated *Schnitzer Ó Sé* himself into *Schnitzer O'Shea* in 1985. I primarily rely on Ó hAodha's translation, *Exiles*, and largely refer to the novel in this context. When referring to the original Irish-language version, I use its Irish title *Deoraithe*.²⁵ I will only use Mac Amhlaigh's other novels in their translated forms, and thus will use their English-language titles. I refer to Irish language articles and Mac Amhlaigh's diaries, which are mostly written in Irish, and have provided my own translations.

In *Exiles*, we witness how persisting culture, accent, and language work alongside factors such as gender and class to heighten the anxiety of identity negotiation and further complicate a sense of belonging in the host land. As language, accent, and dialect are the primary features by which Irish people in Britain are identified, they contribute to how Irish people access British society and build 'better' lives for themselves. This is particularly important in the novel, as the emigrant protagonists are specifically Connemaran *Gaeilgeoirs*, an identity that shapes their relative position within the Irish community in Britain and beyond. By acknowledging and creating space for the Irish community in Britain in the text, Mac Amhlaigh paradoxically explores the difficulty of fully embodying this identity in the past – asking whether emigrants became too British in exile or were too Irish to fully assimilate into British society – without resolving the question. His characters develop distinct responses to this sense of displacement. Nano chooses to branch out beyond the comfort of other Irish emigrants. Trevor insists on staying among those from home.

Mícheál Ó hAodha's 2020 English translation of *Deoraithe* was published by Parthian Books, a small, independent, Welsh publishing house with a particular interest in translated literature, founded by a writer and labourer. The translation has expanded the novel's reach among readers in both Ireland and Britain, and has made it possible for *Exiles* to be discussed more readily within the Anglophone academic sphere. In some respects, translation takes place at the expense of the continued use of the Irish language. Aisling Ní Dhonnchadha and Máirín Nic Eoin, however, make a fascinating case for the continuation of an active, and perhaps growing, community of Irish-language writing within the diaspora itself, aided by the Internet and the creation of virtual networks in the twenty-first century.²⁶ Indeed, it is through such networks that I, as a member of the diaspora community, can access and engage with Mac Amhlaigh's original work.

In 'Documenting the Fifties', Mac Amhlaigh insists that his writing in Irish is instinctive rather than a political choice.²⁷ As an Irish-language writer, he belonged to an active community of writers and translators interested in migration, including Máirtín Ó Cadhain, Seosamh Mac

²⁵ I very occasionally refer to the texts simultaneously when my point is uniquely relevant to both.

²⁶ Ní Dhonnchadha and Nic Eoin 'Ar an gCoigríoch,' 14.

²⁷ Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties,' 8.

Grianna, and Seán Ó Ríordáin.²⁸ Each of these twentieth-century writers consciously chose to write in Irish. Translation, although an accepted part of the culture and community of Irish writing, thus manages to be at odds with authorial intention, even when it is done with the author's full support. Indeed, Mac Amhlaigh's praise of Valentin Iremonger's translation of *An Irish Navy*, stating that Iremonger did him a 'great service'²⁹ by translating the text into English, as well as his decision to translate other works, such as his satire *Schnitzer Ó Sé/Shea* himself, suggests a willingness for his work to reach this expanded audience rather than a desire to restrict readership solely to Irish speakers.

Throughout the thesis, I use the term 'the Irish community' to refer to Irish emigrants in Britain, both within the novel and in Mac Amhlaigh's reality. The word 'community' is used throughout *Exiles* and appears liberally in Mac Amhlaigh's journalism, which often focused on providing insight into everyday life for the Irish in Britain.³⁰ When considering community and identity for the Irish in Britain, Mary J. Hickman highlights that 'Community for a migrant group has to be considered in the context of strategies of assimilation, integration or incorporation, because 'community' implies difference; and that difference may manifest in a variety of ways at different times.'³¹ Hickman's observation reveals the complexity of the notion of community in *Exiles*. There are further linguistic complexities. In *Deoraithe*, Mac Amhlaigh mostly uses the word *comhlúadar* to refer to the 'Irish community,' which refers specifically to a form of social community or company. Occasionally, for example, in reference to the 'Catholic community,' he instead uses *pobal*, a word generally more aligned with 'the people', suggesting a greater sense of structure and institution.³²

In her essay on social realism in Irish migrant texts of the 1960s, Clair Wills considers Mac Amhlaigh and *An Irish Navy* as part of her broader argument about how the realist literature of the Irish community in Britain differed from that of Britain and Ireland. Her comments are distinctly relevant to *Exiles*, even though it is set earlier and published later than the texts she examines. She observes:

²⁸ List inspired by the writers named in Aisling Ní Dhonnchadha and Máirín Nic Eoin's work, including: 'Ar an gCoigríoch'; Nic Eoin, 'Idir Dhá Chombairle/ Between Two Minds.'

²⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties,' 9.

³⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties.'; Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Middle Nation,' *The Irish Times*, 14 October 1970, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Middle Nation: Social Life and the Emigrant,' *The Irish Times*, 15 October 1970, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Middle Nation: Finding Our Feet,' *The Irish Times*, 16 October 1970, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Vanishing Irish,' *The Irish Times*, 29 March 1980, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

³¹ Mary J. Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity*, 224.

³² Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *Deoraithe* (An Clóchomhar, 2009), 21, 105; Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla, ed. Niall Ó Donaill, An Gúm, 1977, <https://www.teanglann.ie/en/fgb/>.

Irish migrant realism differs both from Irish realism set in Ireland and from contemporary British working-class realism, which tends to narrate social mobility, often through a romance plot [...]. In both documentary and realist Irish migrant texts of the 1960s, however, the link between home, family, and social mobility is consistently broken. The uncertain place of Irish migrants in the fictional world of the urban British working class reflects their peripheral status as laborers in, but not of, the social fabric of that class. The “community” in Irish migrant texts typically lacks homes, parents, and the basic ingredient of the couple. While Irish immigrant narrative mirrors some aspects of British working-class realist fiction and the New Wave films of the early 1960s (particularly in its focus on labor), the rejection of a marriage-and-family plot is a crucial difference.³³

By encouraging connections between the Irish community and other immigrant groups in Britain, Mac Amhlaigh proposes a solution to the broken social mobility experienced by a society built on sharply gendered experiences of labour and community. At the novel’s end, Trevor’s experience of hard labour and hard drinking anticipates the intrusion of his wife and children, breaking the masculinist boundary of his current lifestyle. Meanwhile, Nano’s narrative concludes with her deciding to pursue a relationship with Lithuanian emigrant and colleague Julius, leaving behind her former fiancé, Máirtín, a representation of the Irish community at home. The conclusion of Nano’s story, in particular, highlights Mac Amhlaigh’s view that there is merit in developing communities in the host land which extend beyond ethnic boundaries, whilst recognising real Irish emigrants’ mixed-culture marriages.³⁴

In Chapter One, I explore the personal aspects of *Deoraithe/Exiles* in the context of Mac Amhlaigh’s journalistic work and archival materials, and the narrative framing that results from this autofictional, retrospective text. Chapter Two explores how living in London sustains Trevor’s insular lifestyle and adherence not only to his Irish identity but specifically to his Connemaran Irish-speaking identity, and contrasts his experience with Nano’s in Norwold. Chapter Three explores Trevor’s minimal involvement with London’s post-war multiculturalism. In contrast, Nano embraces the hospital’s diversity, learning from her colleagues and forging connections with others who have left home to build a new life, much as Mac Amhlaigh himself did. Ultimately, it is clear that Mac Amhlaigh champions Nano’s approach, finding merit in

³³ Wills, ‘Realism and the Irish Immigrant,’ 374.

³⁴ Breda Grey, ‘From ‘Ethnicity’ to ‘Diaspora’: 1980s Emigration and ‘Multicultural’ London,’ in *The Irish Diaspora*, ed. Andy Bielenberg (Pearson Education, 2000), 79; Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *An Irish Navy: Diary of an Exile*, trans. Valentin Iremonger (Collins Press, 2003) 23,24,33.

developing an Irish identity that is in dialogue with living in Britain and with Irishness on a global stage.

Chapter 1

‘And if he’d been able, he’d have memorised and recorded every single word and gesture of these people’:
Exiles, Between Fact and Fiction.

Author, narrator, character

The story of *Exiles* is strongly influenced by Mac Amhlaigh’s own experience of moving from Ireland to Britain in the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, we know from his non-fiction work that the writer’s intention was as much to ‘document’ his community as it was to tell a story.³⁵ In this chapter, I show that understanding Mac Amhlaigh’s handling of the formation of Irish identity in Britain in Nano and Trevor’s narratives requires an appreciation of how his experience of emigration to Britain informs the work. The narrative captures a specific moment in history and the specific challenges faced by the Irish in Britain, which directly reflect those experienced by Mac Amhlaigh’s own Irish emigrant community in Britain in the 1950s. The novel consistently engages with the dialectical tension Harte recognises in British-Irish emigrant literature, ‘between adherence to a fixed originary identity and the evolution of a flexible, contingent migrant identity.’³⁶ The text’s singularity, however, lies in Mac Amhlaigh’s decision to break this tension and present a definitive conclusion by highlighting Nano’s ‘flexibility,’ empathy and open-mindedness as a more successful approach to forging a new sense of Irish identity in Britain. I demonstrate that this conclusion is unique to *Exiles*, as it is grounded in lived experience rather than projected onto it, unlike the depiction of unhappy emigrants found in many anti-migration narratives by writers who did not experience settled migration themselves. I argue that there is value in understanding Mac Amhlaigh’s personal experience and how it influenced *Deoraithe*, and the conclusions he draws in the text. In doing so, I trace a tension in the text between its fictionality and its reality, rooted in Mac Amhlaigh’s personal story and heightened by its retrospective perspective.

Mac Amhlaigh’s diaries suggest he began writing the novel in 1975. They also initially date the narrative to 1951, the year he emigrated from Kilkenny to Northampton, although the

³⁵Mac Amhlaigh, ‘Documenting the Fifties’.

³⁶ Harte, “‘You Want to be a British Paddy?,” 234.

published text is set a year earlier, in 1950.³⁷ The diaries show how Mac Amhlaigh relied on memories of a time in his past, writing about life twenty-five years earlier. His extensive previous writing aids his memory of the 1950s. This vast body of work includes his diaries, kept from 1950 through to his untimely death in 1989, his literary notebooks, journalism, and previous novels – most significantly, *An Irish Navy*.

Mac Amhlaigh's choice of geographical settings contributes to *Exiles*' complex positioning between fact and fiction. Many aspects of the novel's portrayal of 1950s Britain, particularly its depiction of Irish London, are distinctly real and recognisable, even to a contemporary reader. Trevor works for real companies, such as the famed 'McAlpine' building firm, and socialises in real pubs, such as the Mother Black Cap and the Hawley Arms. Meanwhile, Nano lives in 'Norwold', a fictional town based on Mac Amhlaigh's own home of Northampton. This is very similar to Mac Amhlaigh's earlier satirical novel *Schnitzer O'Shea*, where the protagonist is mostly based in 'Northmanton' (a more explicitly satirised version of Northampton), although in *Schnitzer O'Shea*, both London and Dublin appear to exist as they do in real life, much like Trevor's London in *Exiles*.

Although the autofictional elements of the text are readily evident, *Exiles* resists the genre's traditional parameters, particularly as the novel is written in the third person rather than the more common first-person perspective. Each of the protagonists' narratives mirrors the trajectory of the writer's own emigration. Niall's story mirrors Mac Amhlaigh's time as an ex-soldier seeking work in Ireland, Nano's reflects his time working in a hospital as an orderly after moving to Northampton, and Trevor's his eventual settling into navying and labouring work (additionally, Trevor too has spent time in '*An Chéad Chath*' before moving to London). Rather than having one protagonist who is clearly the author's alter ego, Mac Amhlaigh's three protagonists cover three distinct moments in his own journey of emigration and seem to represent three different approaches the writer could have taken at each stage in his journey. Niall, the most vocally anti-emigration, resists moving to Britain for work; after returning to Kilkenny, he falls into bad habits and lives an empty, aimless existence with unemployed friends. In London, Trevor clings to an independent lifestyle, rooted in a sense of postcolonial masculinity and tied inextricably to his Connemaran identity, despite his chosen divorce from home. Meanwhile, Nano, living in Norwold, eventually finds comfort and connection by embracing her immigrant identity and recognising the similarities between herself and her displaced colleagues.

³⁷ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *Literary notebooks (undated)*, Manuscript collection, in Irish, *Diaries and Literary Notebooks of Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 1950-1988*, National Library of Ireland.
Mac Amhlaigh *Exiles*, 142.

In many ways, due to this autofictional undercurrent, each protagonist also reflects aspects of the others, navigating three widening, but not entirely detached, paths from the same starting point: on the train at Galway station. The omniscient narrator is also not explicitly Mac Amhlaigh himself. However, the witnessing of these characters' lives is distinctly reminiscent of Mac Amhlaigh's position as a journalist, observing and sharing the experiences of his community with readers both in Britain and back in Ireland. The mirroring of the three protagonists' lives, as well as his connection to the narrator, emphasises Mac Amhlaigh's ties to the novel's world and thus justifies his authority to write the story and memorialise this moment in history.

Oona Frawley discusses Rodger Brown and James Kulik's idea of 'flashbulb memories,' which are retained due to the high emotion experienced after a particular event. Frawley considers such memories in an Irish context, using Bloody Sunday as an example, to understand how an individual memory can develop into a cultural memory over time. She states:

Individuals absorb elements of the cultural memory into their personal narratives – a personal narrative concerning Bloody Sunday, for instance, might account for the individual's whereabouts when they heard what had happened, but, over time, as the significance of the day as a turning point or cultural marker became increasingly evident or emphasised in, say, media reports, the individual narrative would tend to absorb something of that nonpersonal narrative. At the same time, since flashbulb memories occur around what we might call major events, the way that individuals construct and reconstruct them directly contributes to the formulation of a cultural memory of those events. This suggests that, in cases of flashbulb memory, a certain symbiosis appears to function between the individual, cognitively driven narrative-memory and the externalised, articulated, cultural memory.³⁸

In *Exiles*, Mac Amhlaigh's personal memories of migration are depersonalised along the lines of Frawley's understanding before being reconfigured as a legacy through the characters in the text. Although the experience of emigration to Britain is not a singular 'event,' Frawley's understanding of this process of remembering a significant, emotional event resonates with Mac Amhlaigh's own literary journey – how he traced his personal memory in *An Irish Navy*, then broadened his perspective in *Exiles*. Nano and Trevor's roles in the text, although specific to Mac Amhlaigh's personal experiences, also serve as representations of their wider communities;

³⁸ Frawley, 'Toward a Theory of Cultural Memory in an Irish Postcolonial Context,' 25.

thus, it is through their interactions and experiences that this sense of cultural memory is invoked.

The complex separation between author, narrator, and character in the text highlights the tension between Mac Amhlaigh as observer and as participant in the world of the novel. The novel encompasses both what he witnessed, particularly in his role as a journalist, and what he experienced as a member of this emigrant community. Mac Amhlaigh not only observed the Irish working class in Britain but also had firsthand experience of what it meant to *be* Irish working class there, having worked in a hospital (as an orderly) and as a labourer, much like his characters. By writing *Exiles*, the author creates a story that speaks not only to his own experience of emigration and labour in Britain in the post-war era, but also to those of his wider community. This broader perspective aligns with his decision to have three equally weighted protagonists with three distinct narrative paths, as well as his decision to include a female character. Having already written *An Irish Navy*, based on his own experiences after first moving to Britain, *Deoraithe* focuses more on capturing a particular moment in time and on a more universal experience of anxiety about the reshaping of identity for the Irish in Britain in the mid-twentieth century. By having two of his protagonists reflect two of the most prominent roles for Irish immigrants in Britain in the 1950s, the navy and the nurse, who have since become archetypal figures of the era, Mac Amhlaigh further emphasises that *Exiles* is not only a novel formed from individual experience, but a representation of his broader community.

In 'Documenting the Fifties,' Mac Amhlaigh reflects on his own experiences writing about the community whilst lamenting the lack of literature focused on this working-class Irish group. He presents *Exiles* as his second chance to create a seminal text for the Irish in Britain, feeling his earlier novel, *An Irish Navy*, did not achieve his aim of capturing the experience in a suitably literary fashion. He stated:

I will always regard it as a great lost opportunity. I could have made a most memorable book of *Dialann Deorai* or *An Irish Navy* I believe if I had any idea at all of what I was doing. I had everything, as they say nowadays, going for me: no one else with the exception of the man who wrote *In a Strange Land* had written books about the Irish labouring class in Britain since Pat Mac Gill was writing back in the 1920's; I had a clear field, I knew my subject through and through, but I lacked the gumption and the experience to make the most of my advantage.³⁹

³⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties,' 9.

He was equally self-deprecating in his discussion of *Exiles*:

I think, and it is perhaps significant – if not very comforting – that more than one reviewer of the last novel valued it more for its social documentary content than for its literary merit. But even that is not to be sneezed at I suppose: there is a vast, unworked area even yet, an area which most of the better-known Irish writers have failed or not cared to exploit.⁴⁰

Within the first pages of the novel, which focus on Niall, the young soldier laments the loss of the Galway *Gaeilgeoirs* to Britain in emigration. The narrator tells us, ‘he’d have transformed himself into some kind of a recording machine for these Irish speakers and their culture, and salvaged their memory the best he could.’⁴¹ It is made evident in Mac Amhlaigh’s reflections that he has consistently tried and, to his eyes, did not quite manage to become the ‘recording machine’ that Niall wishes he could be. This in itself emphasises the connection between the writer and his third protagonist, who both dream of capturing and memorialising the experience of Irish-speaking migration from Galway. Still, Mac Amhlaigh’s overarching message in ‘Documenting the Fifties,’ much like Niall’s wish, is definitive: the writer is advocating for the Irish speakers who are leaving Galway and joining the British working class, whilst justifying his own dedication to continuing their legacy. He sees it as a necessity rather than a choice for him to document their history and later reprimands other writers for not better ‘exploiting’ this ‘unworked area.’ Meanwhile, he lauds earlier emigrant writer Patrick Mac Gill for his early establishment of the ‘subject’ he has now taken up. Mac Amhlaigh is critical of his own literary merit. Still, he recognises the value of his work in keeping the memories of this emigrant community alive, and he aims to actively encourage other Irish writers to do likewise.

Although in ‘Documenting the Fifties’ Mac Amhlaigh laments the lack of writing about the Irish working class in Britain, *Exiles* is heavily influenced by earlier novels focused on the working class, most significantly those of Patrick Mac Gill, a fellow Irish emigrant. When planning Nano’s story in his notebooks, Mac Amhlaigh references a list of authors he aims to emulate, focusing on the ‘social content’ of his female protagonist’s narrative. The names listed include ‘Tressel, Dickens, McGill’, and he also mentions *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair.⁴² Irish emigrant writers such as Mac Gill and Robert Tressell are named alongside the distinctly English

⁴⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, ‘Documenting the Fifties,’ 9.

⁴¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 3.

⁴² Mac Amhlaigh, *Literary notebooks*.

Charles Dickens and the American Upton Sinclair, highlighting the breadth of inspiration behind the text. This list of writers also emphasises that *Exiles* is as much working-class literature as it is Irish emigration literature.

Paul Delaney, in his assessment of early twentieth-century Irish working-class fiction, describes the style of Patrick Mac Gill's novel *Children of the Dead End* as follows:

Many aspects of Flynn's life are based on MacGill's experiences, and the blurring of distinctions between MacGill and his narrator-protagonist means that it is often difficult to determine the precise boundaries of this text. If this is implicit in the formal ambiguities invested in the subtitle, *The Autobiography of a Navy* (whose autobiography, the author Mac Gill or the fictional Flynn?), it is also manifest in MacGill's use of techniques which are traditionally associated with discrete genres, including realist fiction, social documentary, melodrama, life writing, popular romance and the quest narrative. Weaving these forms together, MacGill produced a partially fictionalised autobiography which seeks to expose the inequities of the class system in rural Ireland and industrial Scotland [...]. In such instances, it is hard to interpret Flynn as anything other than a thinly disguised mouthpiece for MacGill.⁴³

This assessment of Mac Gill's novel is equally applicable to Mac Amhlaigh's writing, particularly for *An Irish Navy*, which, with its similar blurring of narrator and author and ambiguous title, is often taken as a direct adaptation of Mac Amhlaigh's real diaries. Although he emphasises the truth of the narrative, Mac Amhlaigh recognises that the novel is actually a combination of his written diaries and recollections of the time, describing it in his notes as being 'based on diaries and recollection – pure factual no fiction.'⁴⁴ The sense of ambiguity seen in Mac Gill's work is equally applicable to *Exiles*, though it is the more obviously fictionalised text. Delaney's given list of genres – 'realist fiction, social documentary, melodrama, life writing, popular romance and the quest narrative' – particularly his acknowledgement of the influence of popular romance and quest narratives in Mac Gill's work, is also very clearly applicable to *Exiles*. The genres resonate with the protagonists' storylines, most significantly with Nano's romance narrative and Trevor's quest to defeat his enemy, Dubliner Christy Power. These connections between Mac Gill and Mac Amhlaigh highlight the extent to which Mac Amhlaigh is in dialogue with, and informed by,

⁴³ Paul Delaney, "'A system that inflicts suffering upon the many': Early twentieth-century working-class fiction," in *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*, ed. Michael Pierse (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 260.

⁴⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Literary notebooks*.

other writers, particularly Mac Gill, with whom he shares the experience of migration without permanently returning to Ireland, political intention and an autofictional bent.

Observing the community

Mac Amhlaigh's diaries suggest he first set out to write a play titled *Deoraithe* in 1963 and continued working on it until at least 1965. Although the first draft of the play is far removed from what *Deoraithe* would become as a novel more than twenty years later, the initial plans hint at the novel's genesis, focusing on narratives of unhappy homes in Ireland and of movement to Britain.⁴⁵ The play's protagonists were named Máirtín and Nóra, reused in *Deoraithe* for Nano's fiancé and Trevor's wife. Around the same time, Mac Amhlaigh was planning another play about characters named 'Colm and Bríd.' Once again focusing on Irish emigration, the early scripts featured an Eastern European character named 'Bruno,' which later literary notebooks suggest was originally the name of Nano's romantic interest in *Deoraithe*, before it became Julius in later drafts.⁴⁶ These examples show how Mac Amhlaigh reworked earlier ideas and memories from this time to develop his later text.

Through my archival research, I discovered that the title *Deoraithe* does not appear in Mac Amhlaigh's diaries and notebooks again until 1975, when he began planning and writing the novel. His notes indicate that there was a period of roughly 10 years between beginning the novel and its eventual publication. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Mac Amhlaigh's contributions to journalism in this era informed the development of *Deoraithe* as a novel. His substantial collection of newspaper articles, alongside his diaries, allowed him to access his original thoughts, feelings and opinions as an Irishman in Britain, from the period the book is set through to the time it was written, in the form of recorded memory.

Alongside his fiction, Mac Amhlaigh's journalistic output was prolific, spanning decades. Indeed, the online archives of *The Irish Times*, one of the many newspapers Mac Amhlaigh regularly wrote for, have contributions spanning from 1968 to 1988, the year before his passing. Much like his creative work, his journalism centred on Irish immigration and life in Britain. His articles for *The Irish Times*, in particular, were written with a clear aim: to present an image of Irish Britain to an Irish audience at home, providing insight into the lives of family, friends, and loved ones living across the water. Within this large body of writing, many of the influences on *Exiles* are very evident; exploring the themes and anecdotes that appear in both his newspaper

⁴⁵ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *Diary*, 1963, manuscript, in Irish, MS 32,596/21, *Diaries and Literary Notebooks of Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 1950-1988*, National Library of Ireland.

⁴⁶ Mac Amhlaigh, *Literary notebooks*.

articles and the novel reveals how *Exiles* developed over time, after many years of reflection on its subject. For example, in an article written for *The Irish Times* in 1970, titled ‘The Gaeltacht in Exile – A Report from “Over There,”’ Mac Amhlaigh writes:

Faigí seomra ar an mBóthar Mór – ‘Let ye get a room in Bohermore’ was the threat held over the head of many a young man who might have been fool-hardy enough to suggest bringing a wife in upon the floor that would some day be his: and rather than hang on in barren celibacy until the old folk had passed on a great many young people settled for a room in Bohermore – or Shantalla, or Huddersfield or Camden Town, Ireland and the Gaeltacht was the poorer for their going.⁴⁷

This call to move to Bohermore is echoed in Chapter 2 of *Exiles* when Nano tells Máirtín she will be moving to England:

Meanwhile, they’d be getting older all the time, Máirtín and herself, the same as all the other couples who let the years pass them by until, by the time they finally got to the altar, they were nothing but a laughing stock. Wasn’t it often said of youngsters who were itching to get married in that part of the country that they should go and ‘get a room in Bohermore’ – the new housing estate in Galway city – seeing as they’d be a long time waiting to get the home-place. And these younger couples were the more enthusiastic and go-ahead ones – or the ones lacking sense, whichever way you looked at it.⁴⁸

Another common theme in Mac Amhlaigh’s journalism, which directly informs *Exiles*, is his understanding of the joy and strength of the Irish community in Britain, as well as the limitations of its homogeneity. Many articles examine the position of the Irish community in wider society, focusing on assimilation (or resistance to assimilation) into British society and broader immigrant connections and networks.⁴⁹ He frequently explores the dichotomy between these two modes of existence, recognising that the positive aspects are contingent upon the negative. This is explored most explicitly in ‘The Gaeltacht in Exile’, where he writes:

⁴⁷ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, ‘The Gaeltacht in Exile – A Report from “Over There,”’ *The Irish Times*, 30 July, 1970, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 9.

⁴⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 24.

⁴⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, ‘The Middle Nation.’; Mac Amhlaigh, ‘The Middle Nation: Social Life and the Emigrant.’; Mac Amhlaigh, ‘The Middle Nation: Finding Our Feet.’

A more easily proven charge against Connacht Irish speakers might be their belligerence – particularly in drink – and their continuance of old feuds that have their origin back home. ‘Spite feamainne’ might be something of a joke in the 1970s but the tendency towards factionism is still real enough and one of the most deplorable aspects of our national character.

However, there is generally a virtue to match a fault and the other side of the coin shows an intense loyalty to friends, workmates and – yes – employers.⁵⁰

Here, Mac Amhlaigh laments the ‘factionism’ and clan mentality of the Connacht Irish in exile, referencing the Connemaran concept of ‘*spite feamainne*,’ an expression stemming from arguments between neighbours regarding the land used for seaweed gathering. This clan mentality is abundantly visible in Trevor’s community in the text. Mac Amhlaigh’s use of the word ‘deplorable’ to describe such insularity and infighting provides an explicit answer to his views on those who take up Trevor’s lifestyle. Where Mac Amhlaigh offers loyalty as a ‘virtue’ in the news article, Trevor is loyal to a fault in defending his Connemaran community in the novel. Additionally, a sense of friendship or care is noticeably absent from the fictional text, emphasising Trevor as an extreme of the negative traits Mac Amhlaigh sees amongst the labouring community, particularly the Connacht Irish-speaking community.

Mac Amhlaigh’s political interests permeate the text, much as they do his journalism. As well as writing for major newspapers, he was an active member of the socialist diaspora group, the Connolly Association, regularly contributing to their journal *Irish Democrat* (formerly *Irish Freedom*). In this instance, the connection between Mac Amhlaigh’s life and his characters is more subtle. Often in the novel, Trevor actively rejects Mac Amhlaigh’s own political beliefs, as is seen in the distrust of unions and disinterest in Northern Irish politics expressed by the navvies in the text.⁵¹ It is, in fact, through Trevor and the navvies’ rejection that the narrative highlights these core issues in the novel.

David Convery, in his work on Irish working-class writing, emphasises the importance of emigrant activists such as Mac Amhlaigh in developing political thought and class consciousness at home:

Migrants sent home remittances that kept people afloat; but they also sent home ideas and methods of organisation such as ‘new unionism,’ syndicalism and socialism [...].

⁵⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, ‘The Gaeltacht in Exile,’ 9.

⁵¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 94, 164.

Irish migrants are therefore part and parcel of the Irish as well as the British working class. They cannot be otherwise.⁵²

This is key, again, for understanding the importance of Mac Amhlaigh's intentions in writing the text. By writing about the post-war Irish community in Britain, Mac Amhlaigh highlights a historically underrepresented working-class community and uncovers its impact on both modern British and Irish society.

There are occasions in the novel where Mac Amhlaigh appears to pre-empt his characters' futures based on his own experiences. Although the political situation in Northern Ireland has long been contentious, his explicit references to navy characters' disinterest in thoughts of a united Ireland appear more pressing at the time of writing and publishing, in the 1970s and 80s, at the height of the Troubles, than they would have been to the labourers of the 1950s.⁵³ Mac Amhlaigh's *Irish Times* article from 1974 titled, 'Long times, Long Kesh,' highlights the writer's interest in Northern Ireland, recounting a day spent in London with his family attending a protest against internment with the Connolly Association.⁵⁴ Much as Mac Amhlaigh's assessment of the insularity of the Connacht Irish in Britain highlights his opposition to the clannish lifestyle Trevor maintains in the text, understanding Mac Amhlaigh's interest in Northern Irish politics highlights another critique of Trevor's labouring community. The characters are largely uninterested in politics and focus only on their own small world, in direct opposition to Mac Amhlaigh's personal morals and actions.

A similar phenomenon of pre-empting the characters' futures occurs in Chapter 7 when Trevor marvels at the wonders of the London Underground:

'The size and scope of the Tube were the most impressive aspects of all; it was hard to get your head around it. One thing, for sure, was that the men who'd built this massive system long ago must have been amazing men [...]. There must have been plenty of Irish in England at that time, too, because only his countrymen would have been capable of the type of slave-work needed to build that monstrous underground system.'⁵⁵

⁵² David Convery, 'Writing and Theorising the Irish Working Class,' in *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*, ed. Michael Pierse (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 54.

⁵³ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 94.

⁵⁴ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'Long Times, Long Kesh,' *The Irish Times*, 23 August, 1974, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 12.

⁵⁵ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 104.

Ó hAodha's use of the word 'monstrous' in his translation reminds the reader not only of the scope of the Tube network but also of its danger. In *Deoraithe*, rather than describing the Tube system as 'monstrous,' Mac Amhlaigh describes the trains as '*rudai buile*', which translates literally as 'mad things'. The use of the word *buile*, in particular, evokes the Middle Irish romance *Buile Shuibhne* (*The Madness of Suibhne*), about a mad, exiled king who suffers a prophetic, violent death.

The inclusion of the Tube in the novel connects with its retrospective positioning. Although Irish labour has historically been involved in the development of the rail network in Britain, the Victoria Line in the 1960s is particularly associated with the work of the Irish post-war community.⁵⁶ This connection with Irish labour and the development of the Victoria line has become part of cultural consciousness, being immortalised, for example, in Dominic Behan's song 'Paddy on the Road,' written for Christy Moore for his 1969 album of the same name. The song offers a bleak but similarly ironic perspective on the dangers of navvying. In Behan's lyrics, the gruesome deaths of young Irish men in exile are written with a comedic brevity. Most significantly, the song refers to 'little Charlie Joe Devine' from Limerick, who was 'Built into the new Victoria Line.'⁵⁷ By presenting the Tube as dangerous and mad in *Deoraithe*, Mac Amhlaigh reflects on experiences in his own life through Trevor's lens, without the reader seeing the navvies working on the Tube line, as this occurs in the narrative's future, beyond the text itself.

In his exploration of working-class death in literature, Michael Pierse considers Achille Mbembe's concept of 'necropolitics' and applies it to an Irish working-class context, noting that:

Those writers born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were very aware of the necropolitical *avant la lettre*; Robert Tressell, Séan O'Casey, Patrick MacGill, Frank O'Connor, Thomas Carnduff, James Plunkett and Brendan Behan all observed, in their families or immediate communities, the dispensability of working-class lives. Unlike many of their peers, however, they also identified its systemacity – a revelation that to a great extent impelled their writing and their (variously inflected) socialism.⁵⁸

Pierse mentions two of Mac Amhlaigh's documented inspirations for *Exiles*, Tressell and MacGill.⁵⁹ Indeed, Mac Amhlaigh's work shares a socialist political intent and a similarly

⁵⁶ Antony Badsey-Ellis, *Building London's Underground: From Cut-and-Cover to Crossrail* (Capital Transport Publishing, 2016), 260-261; Ultan Cowley, 'Public Works,' in *The Men Who Built Britain: A History of the Irish Navy*, (Wolfhound Press, 2001), 178-179.

⁵⁷ Dominic Behan and Christy Moore, 'Paddy on the Road', *Paddy on the Road*, Mercury Records, 1969.

⁵⁸ Michael Pierse, "An sinne a bhí sa chónra?" Writing Death on the Margins in Twentieth-Century Irish Working-Class Writing,' in *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*, ed. Michael Pierse (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 174-175.

⁵⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Literary notebooks*.

dismissive approach to the dangers faced by Irish labourers on the building site. When describing Thomas Carnduff's play *Workers* (1932), Pierse writes: 'Beneath their loud machismo is a muted acceptance of their constant exposure to death through workplace hazard that also interpellates capitalist constructions of gender. They also display macabre pleasure in retelling stories of near misses and grotesque deaths.'⁶⁰ This acceptance of mortality is seen in *Exiles*, for example, when, returning on the Tube later in Chapter 7, Trevor considers the stops he passes through on his journey home, including: 'the station he knew best of all – Tottenham Court Road – where the Blarney was located. (This was the big Irish dance hall where Peadar Michael Andrew had nearly fried himself working there once, when he'd struck an electrical cable with a pick-axe.)'⁶¹ The dangers of navvying are presented with the same culturally ambivalent dismissal. The man's accident becomes no more than an anecdote associated with the dance hall. In this (quite literally) passing moment from the text, as Trevor speeds along the Northern Line, Mac Amhlaigh not only emphasises Trevor's own preoccupations and frames of reference as a 1950's London navvy, but also speaks to recognised cultural phenomena from his own life and the lives of the real Irish working-class community.

Centring language

It is clear simply from Mac Amhlaigh's decision to write his novels *as Gaeilge* in Britain that he cared deeply about the Irish language. He insists in 'Documenting the Fifties' that his writing in Irish was out of habit, though he admits it allowed him the privacy to observe 'much of what I heard, saw and noted of Irish (and English) attitudes.'⁶² Mac Amhlaigh's mother came from an Irish-speaking family in Galway, and he was educated partly in Galway before continuing his Irish language education by joining *An Chéad Chathlán Coisithe*. Mac Amhlaigh wrote for numerous Irish-language journals, most prolifically for *Amárach*, the self-described '*Guth na Gaeltachta*' (Voice of the Gaeltacht). He was also particularly celebrated for his Irish-language writing.⁶³ Mac Amhlaigh belonged to a relatively new generation of Irish-language writers, following closely behind writers like fellow journalist and poet Seán Ó Ríordáin, who were not raised speaking Irish as their first language.⁶⁴ Much like Ó Ríordáin, however, Mac Amhlaigh did

⁶⁰ Michael Pierse, 'An sinne a bhí sa chónra?', 178.

⁶¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 116.

⁶² Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties,' 8.

⁶³ Seán Hutton, 'Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall Peadar,' *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/mac-amhlaigh-donall-peadar-a4986>.

⁶⁴ Nic Eoin, '*Idir Dhá Chomhairle*/ Between Two Minds,' 222-224.

have familial connections to the *Gaeltacht* and, consequently, was deeply connected to this Galway identity.

Mac Amhlaigh's connection to his characters is once again highlighted when Niall considers his own connection to the Galway *Gaeilgeoirs*. The narrator states:

This race of people were a strange breed in the way their loyalty to one another could transform itself in an instant and break into argument: it was love/hate as two sides of the same coin. This was a peculiarly Gaelic trait Niall understood because he knew these people intimately and recognised their ways.⁶⁵

Niall's narrative mirrors Mac Amhlaigh's experiences pre-migration, and by emphasising the character's connection to and understanding of the Galway *Gaeltacht* community, the writer appears to legitimise his own. A sense of insecurity about his status as an Irish-language writer can be traced throughout Mac Amhlaigh's work; this is most readily evident in his satirical novel *Schnitzer O'Shea*, where the eponymous character repeatedly finds himself marginalised in his quest to become a poet.⁶⁶ He maintains a characteristically self-deprecating tone when discussing his own work, evident throughout 'Documenting the Fifties.'⁶⁷ Mac Amhlaigh's dedication to writing in the Irish language is evidenced in his literary notebooks, many of which end with an extensive glossary of Irish words and their English definitions.⁶⁸ This speaks to the author's lifelong interest in learning Irish – he continued to make a concerted effort to broaden his vocabulary and use the language effectively – but it also suggests an insecurity about the literary quality of his Irish-language work. Ó hAodha pays tribute to Mac Amhlaigh's interest in language and linguistics by including a glossary of Irish slang terms used in the translation of *Exiles* at the back of the novel, many of which have their origins in the Irish language.⁶⁹ There is a similar glossary at the back of Mac Amhlaigh's own translation of *Schnitzer O'Shea*.

Deoraithe is not only written in Irish, but the language is central to the novel's plot and characters. Being Irish speakers is crucial to the three protagonists' identities; in Trevor's case, in particular, he is both a native Irish speaker and illiterate, adding another layer to his sense of displacement. The importance of the Irish language in *Deoraithe/Exiles* is another layer of Mac Amhlaigh's own life and experience that permeates the text. In the context of Mac Amhlaigh's

⁶⁵ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 3.

⁶⁶ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *Schnitzer O'Shea* (Brandon Book Publishing, 1987).

⁶⁷ Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties.'

⁶⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *Literary notebooks*.

⁶⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 303-307.

own experience with the Irish language, as understood through his writing, there is a sense that writing a novel that did not centre Irish speakers and their specific experiences of emigrating to Britain would be inauthentic to his mission to document his community.

Exiles opens with a strong invocation from Niall on behalf of the Irish language: he elevates the status of Irish speakers while criticising the government's handling of Ireland's relatively recent independence, amid the economic instability that drove the mass migration of the mid-century. The number of people boarding the Dublin train with Niall, bound for Britain, is described as a 'disaster' and as 'more than a catastrophe.'⁷⁰ Meanwhile, the Irish language is described as 'That sweet, melodious Irish that was music to Niall's ears,' and the people speaking it as 'the rightful heirs to the Irish nation!'⁷¹ Significantly, he mentions that he would keep these people at home 'for the sake of the Irish language, as much as anything else,'⁷² emphasising the fact that the loss of these people from Ireland is equally the loss of the Irish language itself.

Niall's lamentation, by promoting the importance of *Gaeltacht* culture, inverts the social order prevalent in Irish society in the 1950s, in which the traditional agricultural landscape of the West was falling behind the urbanisation and industrialisation of the East. Those living in the Connacht *Gaeltacht*, in particular, were amongst the poorest and most forgotten in society.⁷³ Niall, and consequently Mac Amhlaigh, raises their status from desperate emigrants to the guardians of ancient Irish culture. Niall's statements reach beyond the scope of the narrative, creating a covenant between writer and reader where, by engaging with the work, we partake in the continuation of the history of this particular group and culture.

In a particularly poignant article titled, 'Home and Away As A Gaelgeoir in Exile,' Mac Amhlaigh advocates for the Irish language in a vein similar to Niall's. Documenting a trip to Dublin, he considers the speaking of Irish in Dublin and in the *Gaeltacht*, whilst encouraging people to keep the language alive:

I am not unaware, as those hostile to Irish might suggest, that English is the language spoken by the overwhelming majority of our people, but with our great-grandfathers, the position was the reverse and that didn't prevent them from making English their own; with a like determination I believe we can at least preserve our language from extinction.

God knows, maybe I shouldn't even be writing this article in English but again, contrary

⁷⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 3.

⁷¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 2.

⁷² Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 3.

⁷³ For a comprehensive understanding of the economic conditions of the *Gaeltacht* in the Irish Free State, see Úna Newell, 'Poverty and the Irish Language,' in *The West Must Wait: County Galway and the Irish Free State* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015).

to what the Irish knockers make out, many of us Gaeilgeoirí have an affection for English. Still and all, if we are not to lose the battle we must assert ourselves more, speak Irish wherever possible and make an issue of things like hotel notices and such; the task, as socialists are fond of saying, must be to strive tirelessly to win people over to a love and appreciation of Irish and to combat the pernicious mock-liberal claptrap being so energetically churned out to the detriment of national ideals⁷⁴

The article's reference to the 'battle' to keep the Irish language alive is reminiscent of Niall's thoughts, particularly his feeling that the emigration of *Gaeilgeoirs* was 'a form of treachery to the ideals of the heroes of 1916 and the generations who'd come before them.'⁷⁵ Invoking the Easter Rising and the fight for Irish independence, Mac Amhlaigh positions the maintenance of the Irish language as a postcolonial challenge for the independent republic.

Mac Amhlaigh's sense of his own identity comes into play in the final part of his article when, upon returning to Birmingham, he stops in a local pub. He reflects:

And in a little over an hour I'm back in the centre of Brum supping a good pint of Brew Eleven at fifteen pence (the price of a small bottle of Smithwicks at Dublin Airport) in a homely, decaying Victorian pub among voluble, turbaned Sikhs, Irish building workers, West Indian railwaymen and a handful of locals. The atmosphere is Saturday-afternoon-relaxed and nostalgically Nineteen Fiftyish, and though I am loth to admit it, it all feels very like home. Which after nigh on a quarter of a century, I suppose it is.⁷⁶

Going against the expected narrative, Mac Amhlaigh accepts Britain as his 'home' and expressly appreciates the multiculturalism found in its major cities. The article's interest in the preservation of Irish, Mac Amhlaigh's consideration of his own identity in Britain, and his explicit reference to nostalgia for the 1950s connect this article, written a year before he began writing *Deoraithe* in earnest, with several of the novel's themes.

Mac Amhlaigh's way of connecting with other immigrant colleagues and engaging with this multicultural society, as documented in his diaries and in *An Irish Navy*, was often through language learning and an interest in cross-linguistic communication. These moments of cultural exchange were most often early in his time in Britain, whilst working as a hospital orderly. In *An*

⁷⁴ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'Home and Away: As a Gaelgeoir in Exile,' *The Irish Times*, 20 March 1974, 14, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁵ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 3.

⁷⁶ Mac Amhlaigh, 'Home and Away,' 14.

Irish Navy, Mac Amhlaigh expresses an interest in Italian and comments on the differences between Irish and Eastern European languages, such as Ukrainian.⁷⁷ He clearly enjoys exploring the connections and differences between these different languages. He also aligns himself with their speakers and their shared experience of living in England and having a language other than English. In considering Irish, amongst other European languages, Mac Amhlaigh learns something new about his beloved language, seeing it from a different, more global perspective. Mac Amhlaigh's interest in other languages mirrors Nano's curiosity towards the other communities she sees around the hospital in *Exiles*. When trying to impress Julius in the pub and understand more about his life, she learns the Lithuanian word for cheers:

Your health,' said Julius, raising his glass of beer and repeating the word in his own language afterwards. Nano asked him to say the word again, and then once more, until she was able to pronounce it properly herself. 'Sviekas,' she said to Julius and he nodded with approval.⁷⁸

This interaction is similar to the instances of language exchange and linguistic interest that Mac Amhlaigh exhibits in *An Irish Navy*. Nano shows care, listening to Julius repeat the word so she can pronounce it accurately. Indeed, at the end of the novel, in Chapter 17, Nano uses it again after Julius buys her a drink before the hospital Christmas party:

'Your health!' said Sheila raising her glass. And whatever came over her then, Nano raised her glass too and uttered the word '*Sveikas!*'
'*Sveikas!*' replied Julius, proudly, his eyes melting into hers as he said something in his own language.⁷⁹

This is presented as a moment that deepens the connection between the two characters. Nano, who has struggled with losing the opportunity to speak in her own native language, offers Julius the chance to exercise his own mother tongue, and he clearly registers her kindness and interest in remembering the word.

Trevor's relationship with the Irish language in the novel is more innate and less intellectualised than Niall's and Nano's. However, his experience as a *Gaeilgeoir* in Britain also mirrors Mac Amhlaigh's in interesting ways. In Chapter 7, Trevor recalls an incident with

⁷⁷ Mac Amhlaigh, *An Irish Navy*, 22.

⁷⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 214.

⁷⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 293.

someone from the 'Tipperary crowd' who 'had taken exception to their speaking Irish, as if to say (according to the fellow they were arguing with, anyway) that Trevor and Walter and their friends were talking about them behind their backs.'⁸⁰ This hearkens to the hostility towards the Irish language mentioned in 'Home and Away As a Gaelgeoir in Exile,'⁸¹ as well as to similar incidents of hostility from other Irish people towards the speaking of Irish in *An Irish Navy*.⁸² This hostility speaks to the wider anxieties surrounding class, language, and belonging amongst the diaspora that are centralised in *Exiles*.

The trajectory of *Exiles*' overarching narrative could only have been built by someone who personally navigated the complexity of understanding one's identity as an Irishman in Britain in the mid-twentieth century and had borne witness to the community's struggles. The novel's thesis is built from this perspective. *Exiles* is a text, therefore, that is uniquely connected to the author's own life and personal experience. Additionally, it is a novel deeply rooted in two distinct temporalities: the time in which it is set (the mid-twentieth century) and the time in which it was written and published (between 1975 and 1986). It is in living through this period and in witnessing the socio-cultural changes that occurred between the mid and late twentieth century that Mac Amhlaigh could write a novel with such a present narrative perspective.

⁸⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 112.

⁸¹ Mac Amhlaigh, 'Home and Away,' 14.

⁸² Mac Amhlaigh, *An Irish Navy*, 162-163.

Chapter 2

'Free from the ties of home and family': Irish-Speaking Labour in London

In *Exiles*, Trevor Nee's life in London is distinctly tied to masculinity, isolation, and hard labour. In line with Mac Amhlaigh's view of the Connemaran community in exile, as expressed in his journalism, the navy also shows a fierce loyalty to his Connemaran identity throughout his narrative.⁸³ He actively resists assimilation, attempting to remain amongst a community he recognises from home, and carries distinctly Irish social ideologies connected to postcolonial ideals of masculinity and language, born from the fight for Irish independence. Mac Amhlaigh positions London as a home for the Irish language in *Exiles*. London, being a large, urban, multicultural city, is paradoxically diverse enough to allow Irish immigrants the space to retain this highly specific, localised Irish identity. Primarily, by living in the city, Trevor can live his life in exile through his native language, thereby circumventing the fears of language loss attributed to the emigration of Irish speakers to Britain, as Niall voices early in the text.⁸⁴ Nano's experience as a *Gaeilgeoir* living outside the capital city contrasts with Trevor's. She feels isolated from her home community of Irish speakers and initially looks to London for a solution, though she ultimately remains in Norwold.

The different experiences of Nano and Trevor as Irish-speaking workers in Britain are directly connected to their geographical locations: Trevor in the capital and Nano in the more rural town of Norwold. It is clear that Nano, too, sees London as the natural place for Irish speakers in Britain, feeling that she does not fully belong within the hospital's Irish community. However, unlike Trevor, she is more willing to explore and embrace her discomfort in exile, and to look beyond the Irish community to find a sense of place and home. Contrastingly, Nano struggles to let go of the moral codes and Catholic tenets prevalent in rural Irish society, while Trevor greatly enjoys the freedom of life without the restraint of social responsibility.

In this chapter, I show that Mac Amhlaigh complicates his navy character's thoughts and feelings about his life in Britain by sustaining an undercurrent of dramatic irony throughout his narrative. This dramatic irony is most frequently employed when Trevor's own perspective is compared with a broader view of his community. While Trevor continually insists on his satisfaction with his lifestyle, the narrator's assessment of the wider group of Irish labourers

⁸³ Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Gaeltacht in Exile,' 9.

⁸⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 3.

highlights Mac Amhlaigh's ambivalent approach to migration by encouraging the reader to question how great the navy's life truly is. The more Trevor insists that his life in Britain is perfect, the more starkly the isolation and exploitation at its heart are laid bare.

Additionally, although Trevor believes he is maintaining his Irishness in exile, this irony is heightened as it becomes clear that the Connemaran identity he has formed in London is directly connected to life in an urban hub, where he can detach from his religion, live anonymously, and make moral decisions that would be criticised at home, making it, in fact, a distinctly London-Irish rather than native Irish identity. Despite openly appreciating the freedom of his life in Britain, Trevor chooses not to recognise these changes in his lifestyle as a shift in his sense of identity. He resists forging 'a new imaginative relationship with his [or her] world to exist fully'⁸⁵ and consequently keeps himself marginalised. The instability of Trevor's lifestyle comes to fruition in the text, as his narrative ends with the anticipation of his wife and children's arrival in England, thereby ruining his illusion of an independent life in London free from the responsibilities of home.

Navigating London

The history of Irish labour in Britain is, understandably, long and complex, given the colonial relationship between the two countries. The figure of the 'navvy' has developed in part from the culture of *Na Spailpíni* (wandering, often itinerant, seasonal workers who would work across both Ireland and Britain), which existed largely from the seventeenth to the twentieth century.⁸⁶ Many theorists, including Marx and Engels, have recognised that, under British rule, Ireland existed as an agricultural outpost to the mainland, and thus the movement of Irish workers into industry required migration to Britain, historically to northern industrial cities.⁸⁷ Indeed, David Convery recognises that 'the classical image of an urban, industrial working class may also be seen as applicable to the Irish – it is just that, outside the north-east, it was mostly not in Ireland itself.'⁸⁸ The migration of workers in the mid-twentieth century thus emerged from a long-established tradition of Irish migrant labour in Britain. This tradition, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, facilitated a distinct transition from rural, agricultural life in Ireland to

⁸⁵ Harte, "'You Want to be a British Paddy?'" 234.

⁸⁶ Ultan Cowley, 'The Culture of Migration,' in *The Men Who Built Britain: A History of the Irish Navy*, (Wolfhound Press, 2001), 23-28.

⁸⁷ Karl Marx, 'Outline of a Report on the Irish Question to the Communist Education Association of German Workers in London, 16th December 1867,' in *Ireland and the Irish Question*, (Progress Publishers, 1971), 126-140; Convery, 'Writing and Theorising the Irish Working Class,' 53.

⁸⁸ Convery, 'Writing and Theorising the Irish Working Class,' 54.

urban industrial life in Britain. By the mid-twentieth century, London and the south of England had replaced Scotland and the North West as the most popular destinations for Irish emigrants.⁸⁹

Trevor, a member of this mid-twentieth century emigrant community, believes he is much happier working as a labourer in London than living at home with his family in Galway. Within the first few pages introducing the character, the narrator tells us:

Trevor Nee might have been in exile but there was no way that he was sad about leaving home; the opposite was true, in fact. For Trevor, it was as though a weight had been lifted from his shoulders; he felt free from the ties of home and family [...]. In truth, he had such little fondness for his place of birth that it wouldn't have bothered him in the slightest if he'd never set eyes on the place again [...]. Trevor couldn't dream of a better set-up than he had over here. He had really fallen on his feet because this was the land of opportunity for those who sought it, a place where the only man who'd no money was the waster who couldn't get his act together and do some work.⁹⁰

Very quickly, the dynamics of Trevor's relationship to London and to his work are laid bare. He appreciates that he can escape his home life and stifling marriage, which the reader later learns occurred after his wife Nóra fell pregnant,⁹¹ as well as the opportunities for work and to earn money. The city offers Trevor a sense of freedom, and, as a man with a strong drive and determination, he buys into the narratives fed to his community that hard work will reap bountiful rewards. This narrative does not come to fruition within the text.

The consequential discovery that, despite these assertions, '[t]he reality was that for the amount of interaction that Trevor and the other lads had with English people, they may as well have been living at home in Ireland,'⁹² creates a deep sense of irony, just as it emphasises the navy's hybridity. Although Trevor is greatly attached to his Connemaran identity, his is a Connemaran identity that exists directly as a result of his also being a Londoner, rather than an identity formed from a love of his home. By articulating Trevor's divorce from Ireland so early in the story, Mac Amhlaigh promotes the juxtaposition between the navy's attachment to his cultural identity and his attachment to his independent life in London.

⁸⁹ Ultan Cowley, 'Twilight of the Navy,' in *The Men Who Built Britain: A History of the Irish Navy*, (Wolfhound Press, 2001), 89.

⁹⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 29-30.

⁹¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 174.

⁹² Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 175.

Over the course of Trevor's narrative, Mac Amhlaigh develops a nuanced and ambivalent picture of life in exile, exploring a broader perspective on life in London for Irish labourers by taking into account the thoughts and opinions of the navy's colleagues. It is made clear very early in the narrative that Mac Amhlaigh presents the Irish community in Britain in the 1950s as economic emigrants.⁹³ In an article exploring migration and identity in twentieth-century Irish-language literature, Nic Eoin and Ní Dhonnchadha provide a comprehensive overview of many texts that take up an anti-migration sentiment, including Padraic Ó Conaire's *Deoraiocht* as well as writing by Ristéard de Paor and Diarmaid Ó Gráinne, whose work often explored destitution amongst the Irish in Britain. Nic Eoin and Ní Dhonnchadha, using Niall as evidence, position Mac Amhlaigh with Seosamh Mac Grianna and Máirtín Ó Cadhain in critiquing migration patterns of the 1950s and 60s.⁹⁴ They suggest Mac Amhlaigh saw the *Gaeltacht* migration of the post-war era as 'an index of the economic and cultural failings of the postcolonial state.'⁹⁵ This aligns with the navvies' assessment of their home country in the novel. However, Ní Dhonnchadha and Nic Eoin's assessment, being only a brief summary in a broader overview of migration-centred Irish-language literature of the era, does not take into account that while Mac Amhlaigh is critical of the need for migration, his emigrant characters are not unhappy, desperate figures. Though life is by no means easy for the Irish in exile, they are content with their decision to leave Ireland and with the lifestyle they maintain in Britain. Indeed, even Niall himself, although critical of emigration at the beginning of the text, is considering moving to Britain at the novel's end.⁹⁶

Mac Amhlaigh's exploration of Trevor's navy colleague's feelings about their migration reveals an underrepresented perspective on what they learn after settling in Britain. He emphasises that these emigrants feel betrayed by the independent Irish government, whilst foregrounding the centrality of economics and work to the migration of this era. This is presented in the text when Trevor travels to work in the back of a lorry in Chapter 7. The narrator also picks up a religious motif, recognising the ties Irish identity has historically had to nationalism, but also, significantly, to the Catholic faith:

On arriving over here, a different outlook had inculcated itself which represented a break from previous generations. They were like a people who'd had a sudden conversion to a new religion and had left the precepts of the old one behind forever [...]. It was as

⁹³ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 15.

⁹⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 3.

⁹⁵ Ní Dhonnchadha and Nic Eoin, 'Ar an gCoigríoch,' 67.

⁹⁶ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 244.

though every man understood deep down that Ireland had failed him: each one had made a conscious decision to turn his back on his previous life at home – its simplicity, gossip and often overly relaxed attitudes. They were focussed now solely on their lives in the here-and-now – earning money, having the craic, earning the best pay possible and spending it as quickly again [...]. The fact was they'd lost faith in their own country and in the useless shower that were running it. Over here, most men were earning two pounds a day or even more, whereas if they'd been back home they wouldn't have had any work! And to top it all off, they'd a freedom and a scope in their lives that they'd never had in Ireland.⁹⁷

When discussing Mac Amhlaigh's earlier novel, *An Irish Navy*, Jean Philippe Hentz explores another theme common to Irish emigrant literature on which Mac Amhlaigh adopts a distinctly ambivalent stance: the prevailing perception in Irish society that the city was a corrupting or sinful influence. Hentz isolates a quotation from the earlier novel where Mac Amhlaigh attends Mass in London, and the priest offers a sermon, 'saying they [Irish labourers in London] were nothing but ignorant beasts that let down their country and their Faith.'⁹⁸ The navvies' feelings in *Exiles* almost directly invert the priest's sentiment, positioning Ireland and the Catholic Church as the ones who have failed them, and emphasising the rebirth they have had in their migration.

In exploring the sense of detachment felt by Irish emigrants in Britain in Trevor's narrative, Mac Amhlaigh considers their position post-migration rather than only in the moment of their leaving Ireland. Aidan Arrowsmith, exploring Padraic Ó Conaire's earlier emigrant novel *Deoraiocht/Exile* and Pádraig Pearse's condemnation of immigrants in the early-twentieth century, pays attention to the fact that, in leaving Ireland, '[t]he rootedness required for 'authentic' Irishness is gone.' He observes:

The migrant no longer belongs, is never one of 'us', always one of 'them,' inhabiting a 'no man's land' in between two authentic cultures. As Stuart Hall puts it, 'Migration is a one-way trip. There is no "home" to go back to.'⁹⁹

Where earlier novels about the Irish in Britain, including Ó Conaire's, often presented decidedly anti-migration narratives of struggle and longing for home, in *Exiles* we see that living in Britain

⁹⁷ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 93.

⁹⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *An Irish Navy*, 74; Jean-Philippe Hentz, 'Gaelic London and London Gaels in Dónall Mac Amhlaigh's *An Irish Navy*,' in *Irish Writing London: Volume 2: Post-War to the Present*, ed. Tom Herron (Bloomsbury, 2014), 23-26.

⁹⁹ Arrowsmith, 'Inside-Out,' 63.

led many emigrants to become disillusioned with the home they left behind. Additionally, it is clear that they sincerely appreciated the opportunities that living in Britain offered. Trevor's colleagues do not harbour the longing for home often attributed to the Irish in exile. Mac Amhlaigh's navvies have no desire to return to the Ireland they left, instead choosing to forge their own space in Arrowsmith's 'no man's land'. They take a more pragmatic perspective, recognising that their lives in Britain, although perhaps not what they desired, are a solution to the issues faced in Ireland in the post-independence era.

Arrowsmith's use of the word 'authentic' to describe the two cultures suggests a sense of inauthenticity to their identity in migration. Trevor's performance of a rural Connemaran identity in London becomes somewhat 'inauthentic' in this urban context, far from home and in the new world of the city. Embracing the opportunities afforded to them in Britain, whilst criticising the Irish government and culture, again highlights how the navvies' sense of 'Irishness' has ultimately become a detached identity. It has been forged as much in their displacement as in their home culture, emphasising how the Irish community settled in London changed over time. They remain greatly attached to some aspects of their prior identity whilst freely detaching themselves from the Irish state. Instead, the navvies appear to be forging a new 'authentic' identity of their own, separate from both Irish and British culture.

Looking in on London

While Trevor carefully maintains his Irish life in London, Nano also finds herself living amongst a predominantly Irish community in Norwold. We are told that 'The Irish were the largest group in Norwold Hospital – even more numerous than the English.'¹⁰⁰ However, unlike Trevor's Connemaran community, she does not find herself amongst other Irish speakers. Much like Trevor, Nano appreciates the freedom and independence her job at the hospital provides. She, too, presents a more hopeful image of the Irish emigrant than is usually associated with the genre. However, she does symbolise the fear of language loss when Niall states early in the novel that he would keep the *Gaeltacht* migrants from emigrating, 'For the sake of the Irish language, as much as anything else.'¹⁰¹

The narrator tells the reader that, during a moment of homesickness, Nano misses speaking Irish:

¹⁰⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 62.

¹⁰¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 3.

If Nano had any regrets about coming over to England it was that she hadn't gone somewhere else; in or around London where there were more of her own people – Connemara people – for company. It'd be nice to hear the odd bit of Irish spoken every now and then, and have the occasional conversation – nice and lively, in your own language.¹⁰²

It is clear that she also sees London as the natural place for Irish speakers in Britain, which aligns with Trevor's Irish-speaking lifestyle in the city. The feeling that she would be more at home in London, amongst other *Gaeilgeoirí*, is shared by Mac Amhlaigh in *An Irish Navy*, where he states:

I hope to leave Northampton and get work in London, if I can at all, for there's nothing to do up in that place. Wouldn't it be fine to be working down here when I'd meet my own old comrades all the time? It would be as good as being back in Renmore!¹⁰³

Hentz believes that *An Irish Navy* shows that Mac Amhlaigh discovered London to be '[...] paradoxically, a Gaelic-speaking city where the traditional culture he experienced in Connemara is alive and flourishing, thus making the British capital, the displaced capital of the Gaeltacht.'¹⁰⁴ He also notes that characters' desire to be in London precedes their desire to return to Ireland.¹⁰⁵ We see this same scenario in *Exiles*: Nano is homesick for the company of others from Connemara; however, her wish is not that she had stayed at home, but that she had moved to London instead. Mac Amhlaigh's characters still seek Irish culture (music, language, company), but they do so in the British capital rather than in their place of origin. The characters are not really seeking home, but instead are seeking what Oona Frawley has termed 'memory practices.'¹⁰⁶ These, as she defines them, are opportunities to enact a sense of cultural memory, to speak a language or listen to cultural music, reinforcing one's sense of identity outside of a home context. The fact that this search for Irish culture appears in both *An Irish Navy* and *Exiles* suggests that, as Hentz notes, Mac Amhlaigh does indeed view a thriving *Gaeilgeoir* community among the immigrant Irish as a specifically London-based phenomenon. Mac Amhlaigh, as a character in *An Irish Navy*, and Nano in *Exiles*, both experience Irish London first from the outside, and thus can recognise how much more prolifically the community can exist in the city

¹⁰² Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 117.

¹⁰³ Mac Amhlaigh, *An Irish navy*, 28-29.

¹⁰⁴ Hentz, 'Gaelic London and London Gaels in Dónall Mac Amhlaigh's *An Irish Navy*,' 18.

¹⁰⁵ Hentz, 'Gaelic London and London Gaels in Dónall Mac Amhlaigh's *An Irish Navy*,' 37.

¹⁰⁶ Oona Frawley, 'Memory Practices: Introduction,' in *Memory Ireland*, vol.2, (University of Syracuse Press, 2012), 129.

than elsewhere in Britain – emphasising that it is in part the pre-existing urban and multicultural nature of London that allows the Irish-speaking community to thrive in the city.¹⁰⁷

The visibility of the Irish language within Trevor's narrative, set in London, compared to its lack of visibility in Nano's, does emphasise the contrast in the experiences of *Gaeltacht* migrants in London and *Gaeltacht* migrants in Britain more widely. Mac Amhlaigh frequently refers to Trevor's speaking of Irish in London, whereas the language is only considered in Nano's story when she directly contrasts her new home with her native home; she is not seen speaking Irish after moving to Norwold. I would suggest that there is still an active decision made on Trevor's behalf to seek out an Irish-speaking community after moving to Britain, and it is significant that he can choose to do so. Despite the explicit insistence that Trevor loves his independent life in London, the narrator makes sure to remind the reader: 'It wasn't that Trevor had become Anglicised: he knew barely ten sentences of English. It was just that he preferred life over here a thousand times more.'¹⁰⁸ This subtly highlights the strength of the Irish language in the city. Trevor can live his preferred lifestyle in London through it; his limited knowledge of English does not prevent him from forging a life there. However, this also contributes to the insularity of Trevor's community. He might emphasise that it is of his own volition, but, in reality, his poor English, as much as his illiteracy, is a barrier to finding a community outside of other *Gaeltacht* migrants in the city. It is clear that Mac Amhlaigh ultimately posits living exclusively through Irish in London as limiting and unsustainable, suggesting the city is not quite home enough for the language to thrive in its displaced capacity.

Early chapter plans found in one of Mac Amhlaigh's literary notebooks show he initially planned for Nano to visit London over the course of the text:

D'fheadfar scéal Nano a thabhairt as Norwold go dtí Londain, dhá chuid a bbeith ann i dtreo as go mbeadh s[é] ar cho[mb] fhaid le scéal Niall.

Nano's story could go from Norwold to London, in two parts, so that it would be as long as Niall's story.¹⁰⁹

They suggest that Mac Amhlaigh intended a significant proportion of Nano's narrative to be set in the capital city. These notes and chapter plans are formally undated, but when mapped against

¹⁰⁷ For information on the diversity (and contemporary superdiversity) of London, see Panikos Panayi, *Migrant City: A New History of London*.

¹⁰⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 95.

¹⁰⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Literary notebooks*.

diary entries in which he references writing *Deoraithe*, they most likely date from the mid to late 1970s, early in his writing.¹¹⁰ Some of Mac Amhlaigh's initial plans suggest that he originally intended to conclude the story with all three protagonists in the capital city.¹¹¹ This would have fundamentally changed the course of Nano's journey with her identity, as finding a way to exist amongst the Irish community in Norwold and developing a sense of community and comfort in her relationship with Julius are central to Nano's character arc. It is of interest to note that, later in *An Irish Navy*, Mac Amhlaigh repeatedly finds himself returned to Northampton from London as the city does not, in fact, provide the home from home he desires. Mac Amhlaigh met his wife in Northampton, they married in 1958, and settled permanently in the city.¹¹² Likewise, Nano begins to settle into Norwold and find an alternative community, which distracts her from her feelings of homesickness. Thus, Mac Amhlaigh's ultimate decision to keep Nano outside London, despite highlighting the city as a home for the Irish language in Britain, is once again a moment in which the novel is informed by the writer's own experiences.

Clan Mentalities

In *Exiles*, Trevor lives in a very insular London-Irish world. His community mostly consists of other manual labourers. Despite their exile, these labourers place great emphasis on county-level and even more localised interactions. Trevor's own view of his identity is threefold; he sees himself first and foremost as a Connemaran, even seeing his wife as below him, as she is from Galway but not his specific village.¹¹³ Then, he associates himself with Galway, and lastly, he is Irish. His experience of Irish London within the novel reflects this specificity: Trevor lives in a lodging house with mostly other Connemaran men, works for Irish companies amongst Irish colleagues, and drinks in Irish pubs.¹¹⁴ Despite this, Trevor differs from the other two protagonists in *Exiles* as he is happy to divorce himself from his life in Ireland and his religion.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, his Irish identity, and specifically his identity as a *Gaeilgeoir* from Connemara, are integral to his story. Trevor's county pride is not a national pride; he thinks very little of his homeland, but he will do anything to defend his county amongst his fellow expatriates.

Living in London, or in Britain more widely, often meant rural Irish emigrants found themselves living amongst an 'Irish' community from across the country for the first

¹¹⁰ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *Diary*, 1975, manuscript, in Irish, MS 32,596/21, *Diaries and Literary Notebooks of Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 1950-1988*, National Library of Ireland.

¹¹¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Literary notebooks*.

¹¹² Hutton, 'Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall Peadar.'

¹¹³ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 176.

¹¹⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 90.

¹¹⁵ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 91, 178.

time. Mac Amhlaigh recognises this phenomenon in Chapter 8 when Nano attends a dance at the Catholic church in Norwold:

In essence, Saint Bridget's was a rural Irish country hall transferred lock-stock-and-barrel to this new country. The only difference was that some of the people here were hesitant and suspicious of one another compared to back home. This was mainly because for the first time – they were coming across people from parts of Ireland that they weren't familiar with.¹¹⁶

This meant that amongst the Irish community in Britain, a new emphasis was placed upon a sense of county identity. Indeed, it would often be through a County Association or local connections from home that an emigrant would find lodgings, a job and a sense of community in Britain.¹¹⁷

At the beginning of the novel, Niall bestows the Irish-speaking Connemaran exiles with a sense of superiority, despite the economic desperation driving them to leave Galway. They are revered by the narrator and protagonist, described as 'the real rightful heirs to the Irish nation' and 'the wellspring of Irish culture.'¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, the build-up to Trevor's fight, the pinnacle of his narrative, highlights a more common hierarchy found amongst the Irish community both at home and in displacement: his enemy, who has been antagonising various men from this same 'tribe' that Niall has praised so extensively, is a man from Dublin. Trevor almost exclusively refers to his enemy, Christy Power, as a 'jackeen',¹¹⁹ an insult specifically levelled at those from the capital city. The Dubliner returns fire by referring to Trevor as a 'culchie',¹²⁰ an insult directed towards those from the country. The navvies have not only brought the Hiberno-English dialect to London with them but also brought Irish hierarchies to the worksite, particularly the tension between rural and urban cultures, which has historically stemmed from Ireland's colonial history

¹¹⁶ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 128.

¹¹⁷ Marc Scully, 'BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks: county identity, "authenticity" and the Irish diaspora,' *Irish Studies Review*, 21, no.2 (2013).

¹¹⁸ Mac Amhlaigh *Exiles*, 3.

¹¹⁹ The origins of the term 'jackeen' are contested; the Oxford English Dictionary believes it appeared first in the mid-19th century, literally meaning 'little jack,' with the diminutive 'een' suffix denoting small from the Irish 'ín' (e.g. *Cailín* to mean young girl) and the jack in reference to the Union Jack flag. The term is generally regarded as an insult towards Dubliners who might hold British sympathies. In the text, Christy Power has learned to box during his time in the British Army.

¹²⁰ The origins of the term 'culchie' are equally contested; the Oxford English Dictionary believes it to have originated from Kiltimagh (Coillte Mach) in County Mayo, with *Coillte* being the Irish word for Forest or Woods, referring to the person living in the countryside.

and the growth of Dublin as an urban hub due to its proximity to Britain.¹²¹ There is irony in the use of these geographically specific insults, since both men are living and working in London, outside their usual context. Still, Christy Power's position on the site compared to Trevor's, as a result of his relationship to the Contractor's wife, is reminiscent of the wider power struggles from which the insults originate, with the man from Dublin having greater power than the man from Galway.

The association between Trevor's physical strength and his cultural identity as an Irish speaker is rooted in Irish nationalist thought, dating back to the origins of the Gaelic League, with figures such as Pádraig Pearse drawing direct connections between masculinity and the strength of the native language. When discussing a letter Pearse wrote to his students offering the prize of a rifle to the most enthusiastic Irish speaker, Aidan Beatty concludes that '[t]he movement to revive the Irish language was thus imagined as a process of reasserting a purified male power and was often associated with a recovery of sovereignty and strength.'¹²² Trevor, as a native *Gaeilgeoir*, views himself as a herald of this postcolonial nationalist masculinity.

In his discussion of 'Navy Narratives,' Tony Murray observes that the places associated with Irish labourers – pubs, dancehalls, and boarding houses – were '[a]ll arenas for the performance and mythologisation of Irish exile, these locations denote a marginal yet finely delineated milieu where unspoken social codes and practices of masculinity, imported from rural Ireland, are refigured in an urban ethnic context.'¹²³ Indeed, in Chapter 7, the narrator tells us:

If you didn't know better and had spotted these men massing here in the early morning light – the men rushing down from the lorries across the site to get shovels and tools – you'd have been forgiven for thinking that these were preparations for some great battle. And, indeed, such a comparison wouldn't have been too far off the mark. Because these men *were* going to war in a way, all battling against one another now to see how much work they could do in one day.¹²⁴

The men spend every day performing a 'battle', competing to prove their strength and power both on the worksite and in their leisure time.

¹²¹ Andrew Kincaid, *Postcolonial Dublin: Imperial Legacies And The Built Environment*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Una Newell, 'Poverty and the Irish Language,' in *The West Must Wait: County Galway and the Irish Free State* (Manchester University Press, 2015).

¹²² Aidan Beatty, 'National Sovereignty, Male Power and the Irish Language,' *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 122.

¹²³ Tony Murray, 'Navy Narratives,' in *London-Irish Fictions* (Liverpool University Press: 2012), 43.

¹²⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 96-97.

Murray's chapter focuses on two other navy-centred texts: John B. Keane's *The Contractors* (1993) and Timothy O'Grady's *I Could Read the Sky* (1997). Keane's novel, in particular, resembles Trevor's London, with a similar insular clan mentality and hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, both texts share a reflective nature, with Keane having also lived in Northampton in the post-war era, when *The Contractors* is set, though it was published in the early 1990s. Murray explores the longevity of this sense of postcolonial masculinity amongst the immigrant Irish workforce:

Masculinised discourses of Irish nationalism and their translation into migrant narratives are particularly marked in the workplace. A recent ethnographic study demonstrates that such accounts are not simply an archaic product of the immediate post-war years. Interviews conducted with Irish migrant men in the English workplace in the 1990s revealed how Irish nationalism was still seen as 'a potentially powerful political mobilising force in imagining an heroic (male) subject position within a nation for whom a normal mode of citizenship is that of emigrant status, social exclusion and subordinated/dislocated masculinity.'¹²⁵

This is particularly relevant given that *Deoraithe* was published in the mid-1980s. These depictions of a highly masculine migrant worksite are not forgotten memories of a bygone era but portray an experience equally relevant to an Irish labourer reading Mac Amhlaigh's work at the time of publication. Thus, the novel speaks to connections between emigrants that have persisted across time.

Trevor is obsessed with succeeding in the fight against the Jackeen, not only to preserve his own reputation but also that of his people. Mac Amhlaigh makes the postcolonial context of the conflict between the two men explicit. In Chapter 10, after Trevor first interacts with Christy Power directly, the narrator tells us:

Trevor had developed an instant dislike for the younger fellow; every ounce of hatred and anger he'd ever felt towards anyone had coalesced into the shape of Christy Power. Manifest here was all the natural mistrust of the countryman towards the city slicker – and vice versa. It didn't bother Trevor in the slightest that the Jackeen had just left the British Army; indeed this made him hate him even more. For Trevor, it was as though

¹²⁵ Murray, 'Navy Narratives,' 43; Liviu Popoviciu, Chris Haywood and Máirtín Mac an Ghaill, 'Migrating Masculinities: The Irish Diaspora in Britain,' *Irish Studies Review* 14, no.2 (2006).

the centuries of treachery that the Irish associated with the Anglicised people of the garrison towns were encapsulated in this Jackeen. Strangely enough, while men like Trevor never got too bothered by an English accent, a Dublin one was a wholly different ball game.¹²⁶

Later, in Chapter 13, the theme is picked up again:

The reputation of Galway and his own people depended on him and if Christy Power beat him, it would be a long time before they'd get over the shame of it. If Power won, he would be humiliated for all time. The Jackeen hated Connemara people, according to Mullen – in much the same way as other people hated blacks. And, truth be told, it was the same in reverse for Trevor. He preferred any other people – the Pole, the Scotsman or the black man – no matter how foreign any of them might have seemed – to the Dublin Jackeen. It was like something that he'd been born with, a distrust and hatred of the city-born Irishman. All he needed was to hear their accent and he'd get angry. And out of all of them, he hated this Christy Power the most!¹²⁷

By invoking racism, Mac Amhlaigh draws attention to the fact that Christy Power's hatred of the Connemaran people is a form of prejudice, and Trevor's dislike in return is equally informed by the power imbalance between the two men. This dislike is heightened given that Trevor is an ex-soldier of the Irish Army and Christy Power is an ex-soldier of the British Army, further pushing the postcolonial link.

Trevor is clearly intimidated by the power Christy has wielded in his fights and on the work site.¹²⁸ Yet, although Christy looks down on the rural men from Galway, he is equally intimidated by their grasp of the Irish language and his exclusion from their conversation. This is best seen in Chapter 10, when Trevor traps the Dublin man by holding the car door shut as the Jackeen tries to get out. Trevor's hapless colleague, Thomas Mullen, shouts insults at the Dubliner in Irish. Although Christy initially dismisses Mullen as 'the idiot with no English', it is clear he feels threatened by his inability to understand the conversation between the two Galway men, being forced to ask for translations to keep abreast of the verbal sparring:

¹²⁶ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 167.

¹²⁷ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 267.

¹²⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 102, 116, 220, 223, 299.

‘What’s he saying?’ the Jackeen asked Trevor. ‘He says you’re like a pig cooped up in his sty, Jack,’ Trevor said with a dirty laugh. This made the Jackeen go totally ballistic; his face drained of colour, and he slammed his shoulder against the door.¹²⁹

Mullen’s insults appear to hit Power twice as deep, with the added affront of their being applied in a language he is excluded from. Power’s reaction to this particular insult hearkens to the reversal of societal norms in the text’s migrant context, the Jackeen would see himself as the modern, urban, Army man, and thus, an association with a farm animal such as a pig would inflict a particular wound coming from a Galway man, of whom he would no doubt hold a stereotypical image of agriculture, boglands and dirt. Again, this is ironic, given that both men now live in London.

The cultural differences between the two men are further emphasised by their names; Christy Power not only has greater power on the building site, with Power itself being the same as the English word denoting the ability to hold control and influence others, but also has a surname of Anglo-Norman origin, hearkening back to the original colonisation of Ireland by the Norman settlers in the 12th century. Trevor’s first name in its Irish form (*Treabhar*) means ‘prudent’ or ‘robust,’ and his surname Nee stems from the Irish word *nia/niadh*, meaning ‘champion,’ a hint at his success when the two eventually clash.¹³⁰ The meanings of the characters’ names also emphasise how this fight becomes an allegory for the journey to Irish independence, with Trevor not only defending his fellow men from Connemara who have been insulted by Power, but becoming a representation of Irish culture and language battling against the overpowering, Anglicised Dublin man, a representation of British power in Ireland.

Exiles’ omniscient narration is reminiscent of Hugh Kenner’s ‘Uncle Charles Principle,’ which, in the context of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, suggests its narrator inherits the language quirks of the various characters. This is seen, for example, in the use of *ainm áitúil* in Trevor’s narrative.¹³¹ Throughout *Deoraithe*, Mac Amhlaigh refers to characters in Trevor’s story using a traditional *Gaeltacht* naming convention, called the *ainm áitúil* (local name), where people are known by their father’s and grandfather’s (or occasionally mother’s and grandmother’s) names to distinguish which families they belong to.¹³² Trevor is often referred to as ‘*Treabhar Bheartla Bhillí*’ (anglicised in *Exiles* to Trevor Bartley Billy). Indeed, Chapter 3, the first chapter focused on Trevor’s narrative perspective, opens with the lines, ‘Trevor Nee, or Trevor Bartley Billy as he was better

¹²⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 169.

¹³⁰ Focloir Gaeilge-Béarla, ed. Niall Ó Donaill, An Gúm, 1977, <https://www.teanglann.ie/en/fgb/>.

¹³¹ Hugh Kenner, ‘The Uncle Charles Principle,’ in *Joyce’s Voices*, (Faber & Faber, 1978).

¹³² Veerendra Lele, “‘It’s Not Really a Nickname, It’s a Method’: Local Names, State Intimates, and Kinship Register in the Irish ‘Gaeltacht,’” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 19, no. 1 (2009): 101–16.

known, arrived off the Irish Mail into the smog-coloured station that was early morning Euston, along with the hundreds of others who'd made the overnight journey from Ireland.¹³³ The same naming conventions are applied to many of the characters he speaks to, including his brother-in-law, Walter Seán Jimmy (*Uaitéar Sheáin Jimmy*), the Ganger Mike Duffy (*Maidhc Ó Dufaigh*), also known as Mike Dudley Stephen (*Maidhc Dudley Stiofáin*), and his young colleague, Mullen, who is also referred to as 'Seán Festy Junior' (*mhic Sheáin Fheistie*). The narrator tells us, 'This young bloke was known to everyone as Seán Festy Junior, and this was the name everyone knew him by back in Ireland, even though Mullen was his surname and he'd been baptised Thomas.'¹³⁴ Interestingly, in his anthropological study of *ainm áitiúil* in the Galway *Gaeltacht*, Veerendra Lele repeatedly emphasises that these are oral, community names and not usually written down.¹³⁵ The men on the site are people whose family connections mean something to Trevor. By referring to characters in *Deoraithe* through this naming convention, which relies on a highly local familiarity, grounded in family connections and its traditionally oral nature, Mac Amhlaigh foregrounds the insularity of Trevor's *Gaeltacht* community in London.

Although they do not receive an *ainm áitiúil*, Mac Amhlaigh gives Irish-language names to non-*Gaeltacht* characters, such as Niall's friend Nicholas Mooney (*Níoclás Ó Maonaigh*), in *Deoraithe*. The fact that Christy Power is referred to only by his full, anglicised name and not, for example, as 'Christie de Paor' or another Irish variation, emphasises the extent of his separation from Trevor's community. Mac Amhlaigh places him very clearly outside of the Irish community and with the English, the only other English-named characters being actual English nurses in Nano's narrative. There is a heavy irony in the fact that the only 'English' character in Trevor's narrative is from Dublin, further emphasising the insularity of his community and the postcolonial tensions at play between the two men. It is true, however, that Christy Power's being considered Irish in Britain is most likely at odds with his own self-perception, an experience shared with many protestant emigrants from Northern Ireland. This all-encompassing Irishness impressed upon immigrants, and Trevor's hatred of the Jackeen, alongside his disinterest in the English, draws attention, in an ironic way, to the detachment of the average English person from the Irish fight for independence.

Trevor's consistent insistence upon his own superiority, much like his insistence upon the superiority of London, is a façade built to convince himself of these beliefs. This adds even more gravity to his success against the Jackeen at the novel's end, when Trevor can prove not only to the navvying community but to himself that he is, in fact, the masculine Celtic hero he

¹³³ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 28.

¹³⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 97.

¹³⁵ Veerendra Lele, "'It's Not Really a Nickname, It's a Method,'" 101.

believes himself to be. Even here, there is further irony: we know this win is unlikely to affect the navy's working life or economic success at all, and might even be to his detriment due to Christy Power's connections with a high-profile contractor. Additionally, we know Trevor's celebrations will be short-lived, given the imminent arrival of his wife and children, which will force him to give up his current lifestyle and the freedom he has found in London.

Mac Amhlaigh deftly presents Trevor's contentment with his life and situation in London, whilst always reminding the reader that the navy is actually being exploited and overworked. A combination of Trevor's misunderstanding of his situation and his desire to maintain social rules allows for this exploitation to occur. Trevor's personal understanding of what is important, preferring to establish himself through his fighting rather than build wealth through his hard work, contributes to the maintenance of this toxic culture. This marks one of the greatest divisions between character and author, although it is also where Mac Amhlaigh's own understanding of Irish labour in London informs the novel most. It is through this conflict between the author's feelings and Trevor's actions that the text's critique becomes even more explicit.

Once again, it is when the narrative broadens from Trevor's own perspective to an overview of his community of labourers that a truer picture of emigrant life is revealed: the exploitation these men faced and the tricks employers used to keep them working, but also to keep them down. When revealing that Trevor earns a higher wage than others on the site, Mac Amhlaigh provides insight into how the contractors paid their men:

The tribalism and sense of pride amongst the Irish were the main reasons that this system wasn't a much greater source of tension: the man earning two pounds never let on that he wasn't getting the highest rate, and the least well-paid were equally loathe to admit they were on the bottom of the heap. It was the custom on such jobs that each worker was handed his pay packet face-down so that none of the others got to know how much his neighbour was getting. It was only the Irish employers who utilised this system, which they'd devised in a spirit of cleverness and greed – and simply because they could get away with it. In this way, they made certain that all their men were always competing with one another, and it actually created a mindset that was detrimental to the workers.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 163.

We once again gain a sense of Mac Amhlaigh as both participant in and observer of the Irish immigrant labouring community. Mac Amhlaigh takes a definitive stance on the subject of pay, emphasising that the system is, in fact, 'detrimental to the workers.' He can explain in intricate detail how these labourers were paid, as he has been paid this way himself, but he also recognises and critiques the broader impacts this has on the system. His criticisms match those expressed throughout his newspaper articles, levelled both against the 'factionism' and 'intense loyalty' of the labourers and against the exploitative practices of building contractors and gangers.¹³⁷ This passage from *Exiles* shows that Mac Amhlaigh recognises the combination of the workers' culture and contractors' greed that ultimately creates a less efficient worksite.

Trevor's position as a navvy is particularly nuanced. Although he suffers the same exploitation as his colleagues, he remains a successful manual labourer with power and influence amongst his peers. Trevor has enough power to get his way with gangers like Mike Duffy; he chooses which site he will work on each day and is unafraid to ask for his wages in advance, even though we, as readers, discover this frustrates the more senior man.¹³⁸ Yet though he can terrorise the gangers, it is unlikely that Trevor himself will move into any more senior position, partly given his place of origin and lack of connections, and partly due to his illiteracy. This, in particular, limits his social mobility. The intensity of his hatred towards the Jackeen is also due to the other man's position of power on the site through nepotism, a position Trevor knows he will never achieve in all his years of arduous work.

In exploring both Trevor's personal experiences and those of his colleagues, Mac Amhlaigh shows that living in London reshapes Irish identity in often contradictory ways, regardless of resistance. While London appears to offer the conditions necessary for the survival of a Connemaran Irish-speaking identity, Trevor's experience demonstrates that this identity is ultimately sustained only by ignoring the ways his embrace of the city's freedom has transformed it. This is typified by the fact that his lifestyle in London collapses upon the intrusion of his wife and children, reminders of his real Connemaran identity, as a husband and father. In contrast, Nano's discomfort with her identity outside London exposes the limits of preserving a home identity, further driving this tension and the persistent use of dramatic irony in Trevor's narrative. By leaving the reader at the moment where Trevor has achieved his great goal of defeating the Jackeen, but also with the knowledge that Nóra and his children will arrive in London in the morning, Mac Amhlaigh challenges the idea that the navvy can maintain his

¹³⁷ Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Gaeltacht in Exile,' 9; Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'Bribes 'Backhandlers' and a disaster called the 'Lump',', *The Irish Times*, 20 May, 1975, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 11; Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'Getting In,' *The Irish Times*, 25 December, 1969, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 11; Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 'An Irish Exile's Experience on an English Building Site,' *The Irish Times*, 13 January, 1968, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 12.

¹³⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 99.

illusion of a 'fixed originary identity.'¹³⁹ This only acts to emphasise how Mac Amhlaigh presents Irishness in Britain as contingent, unstable, and deeply entangled with the very conditions the navy seeks to resist.

¹³⁹ Harte, "“You want to be a British Paddy?,” 234.

Chapter 3

‘Somehow, Nano felt like she’d come home.’: The Irish, Among Other Immigrant Communities.

Of the novel’s three protagonists, Nano’s life, as a female nurse, is the most distant from Mac Amhlaigh’s own. Though he did spend time working with Irish nurses at Northampton Hospital while working as an orderly, she is not as intimately connected with the writer’s life, such as the home in Kilkenny and time spent as a soldier that he shares with Niall, or the time spent with Irish labourers in London that he shares with Trevor. She is, however, the character who best shares Mac Amhlaigh’s understanding of emigrating to Britain and the anxiety of a shifting identity in migration. Consequently, Mac Amhlaigh uses Nano’s story to emphasise the point he wishes to convey through the novel: that embracing one’s immigrant identity in Britain and considering one’s Irishness in this context is ultimately conducive to a fulfilled life in exile. Mac Amhlaigh’s early drafts from his literary notebooks and diaries suggest that *Deoraithe*, as a novel, originated in Nano’s story. The earliest reference to the novel I found in his diaries, from March 13th, 1975, is a draft of the first page of Chapter Two, when Nano’s narrative is introduced. The first reference to writing Trevor’s story in the diaries comes later, on the 23rd of August.¹⁴⁰

Irish emigrants of the post-war era moved to Britain within a broader period of emigration, a moment Mac Amhlaigh explicitly highlights in the novel through references to other immigrant communities, including Polish, Greek, Ukrainian, Italian, Lithuanian, and more.¹⁴¹ The Irish arrived in Britain alongside a significant influx of migrants from former colonies and the new Commonwealth under the British Nationality Act of 1948. Additionally, many refugees and displaced persons from Eastern and Central Europe, affected by World War II and later the Soviet Union, also arrived, supported by the 1943 United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Across all three protagonists’ narratives, there are references to various immigrant groups recently arrived in Britain, encouraged by the government to support post-Second World War reconstruction, as well as to Irish characters who had lived elsewhere within the British Empire. Thus, although the novel maintains a strong focus on the Irish community and the experiences of Irish emigrants, this is achieved through the exploration and

¹⁴⁰ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *Diary*, 1975, manuscript, in Irish, MS 32,596/21, *Diaries and Literary Notebooks of Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 1950-1988*, National Library of Ireland.

¹⁴¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 30, 62, 104, 116, 118, 215, 267, 280, 282.

negotiation of Irish identity in comparison and contrast to other immigrant and cultural communities.

In this chapter, I argue that Mac Amhlaigh uses this sense of post-war multiculturalism to further contrast his two emigrant characters and their individual approaches to their identity. Trevor's disinterest in London's multiculturalism highlights his insularity; meanwhile, Nano's rejection of an insular Irish community, as well as her interest in the lives and experiences of those around her, highlights her open-mindedness and embrace of her migrant identity. As articulated in *Exiles*: 'for the first time,' many Irish emigrants 'were coming across people from parts of Ireland that they weren't familiar with.'¹⁴² Particularly for those from rural areas, moving to Britain was the first time they had lived among people from other parts of their home country, let alone from across the globe. The different experiences of Nano and Trevor once again attest to the complexity of forging a new identity in the host land, with Trevor holding on to his Irish identity first and foremost, whilst Nano is more willing to embrace her position as an immigrant and outsider. Nano's sensitivity to the other communities with whom she works at the hospital, and her willingness to embrace the discomfort and conflict she feels about her life in Britain, contrasts with Trevor's insistence on the superiority of the Irish and his limited success in London. This chapter will explore how Nano contemplates her sense of otherness in Britain, particularly as a native Irish speaker. Moving to Britain and working at the hospital encourages her to understand her Irishness in a new context and to adjust her own identity to account for this new globalised perspective. As evidenced by his interactions with colleagues and friends in his diaries and in *An Irish Navy*, learning about other cultures similarly adjusted Mac Amhlaigh's own understanding of his identity.

Perceiving Multiculturalism, Practising Insularity

In her assessment of Irish migrant realism in the 1960s, Clair Wills recognises that:

Constructed by the hegemonic discourses of race and class in both Irish and British culture, Irish migrant realism traced relationships of contact and connection between "transnational" sites of Irish experience [...]. Migrant writing and writing about migrants in the 1960s illuminate the interchange of British and Irish modes of realism and documentary.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 128.

¹⁴³ Wills, 'Realism and the Irish Immigrant,' 374.

Wills' assessment of the literature of the 1960s is applicable to *Exiles*, as a later work of Irish migrant realism. Mac Amhlaigh recognises that these "transnational" sites of Irish experience' are not only rooted in the interchange of native British and Irish cultures but, as a result of the new post-war multiculturalism witnessed in Britain in the 1950s, are actually transnational on a greater scale. British influence on the Irish immigrant community, including their artistic output, is not only British but is also shaped by the variety of incoming immigrants and the cultures and connections they bring.

While following Trevor around the city, Mac Amhlaigh ensures the reader remains aware of London's diversity. The navy's disinterest in the other communities around him highlights his expressed emphasis on his own Irishness. In an act of almost reverse colonisation, Trevor sees London as a city directly connected to his people through their invisible labour, making it not only Irish in culture but physically Irish. This coheres with Mac Amhlaigh's metaphorical link between the physical rebuilding of London and the city's revival as a living, breathing entity.¹⁴⁴ . The men are rebuilding Britain, but are also literally building themselves a space upon which they have a legitimate and tangible claim.

Mac Amhlaigh maps Trevor's Irish London explicitly. When Trevor first returns to London in Chapter 3, the narrator states:

He felt at home in this vast scattered city, even if the only familiar parts were those Irish areas that he and the other members of his class frequented, areas such as Finsbury Park, Kilburn, Cricklewood, The Elephant and Castle. And, of course, his destination on this particular morning: Camden Town.¹⁴⁵

The novel not only introduces the concept of the 'Irish areas' in London but also lists them specifically. The places listed are not those typically associated with London; he foregoes popular destinations in favour of those he values, where his community exists.

Although the list of place names Mac Amhlaigh gives us to mark out Irish London is presented in English in both the original text and Ó hAodha's translation, by writing about London in Irish, *Deoraithe* inverts the colonial tradition of anglicising place names in Ireland. At times, Mac Amhlaigh even 'celticises' British place names, for example, referring to Trevor's address as '*Bothar Arlington*' rather than the English Arlington Road.¹⁴⁶ He uses Irish grammatical conventions for English words and place names, for example, he often adds a *seimhú* or an *urú* to

¹⁴⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 28.

¹⁴⁵ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 30.

¹⁴⁶ Mac Amhlaigh, *Deoraithe*, 104.

Camden (meaning it is written as *Chamden Town*¹⁴⁷ or *gCamden Town*¹⁴⁸ respectively). Interestingly, Mac Amhlaigh also adds an *urú* to Kilburn (*gKilburn*) despite the letter K not existing in the Irish alphabet.¹⁴⁹ This specific incident demonstrates how Mac Amhlaigh's work exists between Irish and English. Even when writing *as Gaeilge*, he does not translate Kilburn into an Irish word, and instead uses a hybrid form that inverts the traditional Hiberno-English, where Irish grammar is used with English words, reflecting Trevor's sense of claiming London as his own. In another instance of 'celticising' English words, Mac Amhlaigh also invents the Irish language word, 'jeacín' for Jackeen.

Although readers do not witness Trevor interacting with characters outside of his community, London's multicultural nature is acknowledged throughout the narrative. In Chapter 7, Trevor is impressed by the variety of commuters on the Tube as he travels to visit his sister on the Northern Line. Mac Amhlaigh is careful to show that Trevor's disinterest in the other residents of London reaches across all racial and class divides, telling the reader:

It wasn't just the physical layout of the underground that was the source of Trevor's admiration, but also the people who travelled its lines each day. Sometimes, it seemed to him as if they weren't real people at all but an imaginary race of people from another world. Trevor was fascinated by the way that these large crowds would sit there, silent and dead-eyed, with their briefcases, newspapers, umbrellas and books. The students or clerks seemed barely alive at times; exhausted and half- asleep or whispering to one another in low voices. [...] The white man, the black man, the Asian – all the skin colours that God had created at the beginning of time. Even the best of them wasn't a real man in Trevor's eyes; it didn't matter whether they were black or white. When it came to work, he wouldn't have given two flying f**s for them [...]. Trevor knew little enough about the various classes of people that he met on the underground. He knew nothing about their lives, really, and was always surprised that there was work available for so many of them. There was no knowing what kind of wealth was in this country – England, so that she could provide a living for all these different people. There was a hell of a difference between this place and where he'd left behind!¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Mac Amhlaigh, *Deoraithe*, 77.

¹⁴⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *Deoraithe*, 81.

¹⁴⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Deoraithe*, 81.

¹⁵⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 104.

Trevor does not hold specific prejudices against people of other races or ethnicities, which is ironic given his hatred of the Jackeen; he instead believes in the physical superiority of his own small and insular community, the so-called 'real man.' His thoughts on the Tube emphasise the navy's naivety. It is clear that he knows very little about the diverse group of people he lives among in London and is content to remain ignorant. However, his positive assessment of England's employment capacity suggests a broadly ambivalent approach to multiculturalism, whilst once again highlighting the importance the navy places on work. He finds it impressive that the city can support such a variety of people, yet, in his view, they are all beneath him.

These workers are so separate from Trevor's world of hard labour, they may as well be 'from another world.' The instruments they carry, 'briefcases, newspapers, umbrellas and books,' are far removed from the 'shovels, forks, pickaxes and other gear'¹⁵¹ used by Trevor and his navy companions. The irony in Trevor's narrative is evident again when the man who has spent the day digging with manual tools watches the exhausted students. His dismissal of their work suggests an insecurity about his own illiteracy; the objects these workers carry are not only foreign to Trevor but, in many cases, inaccessible to him. He could not do the jobs of these commuters, nor could they take on his physical labour, which he views as the more 'manly' pursuit. It is important to consider how his limited grasp of English and his illiteracy constrain Trevor. As much as Trevor wants to stay amongst his own community, he, like many other labourers of the time, is also reliant on other Connemaran immigrants and connections from home for accommodation and for work.¹⁵² Although Nano has greater freedom through education and a government-funded job with included accommodation, which reduces her reliance on her community, this also means she becomes distanced from the Irish language. These factors individually complicate the characters' ability to settle in Britain, with Trevor only comfortable amongst other Irish speakers and Nano struggling without them.

Elsewhere, in Chapter 3, the narrator provides a summary of how the various post-war arrivals co-existed within London:

Over here in the vast metropolis, different races migrated towards the jobs that best suited their abilities and attributes, and the type of work they were naturally associated with: the Greeks were in the restaurant trade, the Jews were involved in business, while the black people of the West Indies worked as conductors on the buses and trains. The

¹⁵¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 98.

¹⁵² Scully, 'BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks,' 147-148.

English generally took the cleanest or the easiest jobs while the rural Irishman did the heaviest and roughest work of all, the tough life of the navy.¹⁵³

Although this quotation highlights London's multiculturalism, it also suggests a perceived separation among communities, with each assigned a particular role.¹⁵⁴ The centrality of labour to the text, and particularly to Trevor, is demonstrated by the fact that he recognises each immigrant community first and foremost by the work they do. Even within the novel, we know that these assigned positions are more nuanced, as there are several references to Irish bus conductors and ticket collectors in Nano's narrative.¹⁵⁵ This shows that, in reality, immigrant communities were more mixed, as Mac Amhlaigh's own experiences also support. In his newspaper article 'The Middle Nation: Finding Our Feet,' he refers to the '[...] more conspicuously ethnic groups such as the Poles, Italians and West Indians,' whom he has 'worked, lived and drank with [...].'¹⁵⁶ This reveals that even other Irish labourers worked amongst a more diverse community than Trevor's narrative would lead one to believe.

Trevor's astonishment at the volume of work available to such a wide range of people in England puts Niall's experience of unemployment at home in Kilkenny into sharp relief. In Chapter 4, Niall meets with the other 'unemployed lads' of the town, including: 'Khyber Brennan, Mikeo Linnane, the Sniveller Deniffe, Moscow Barry and a gangly fellow by the name of Packie Pugh.'¹⁵⁷ In introducing these characters, Mac Amhlaigh also considers the participation of Irish people in the wider British Empire. The narrator tells us that 'Both Khyber Brennan and Mikeo Linnane had been in the British Army at one point,' and goes on to explain:

Khyber could reel off a list of Indian towns and regions: he was as familiar with those as he was with the names of his native county. He also spoke a patter of Hindustani – if it really was a form of Hindustani that he spouted and not some gibberish he'd made up!¹⁵⁸

Khyber Brennan's nickname and possible knowledge of Hindustani suggest he was stationed at the Khyber Pass, on the modern border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, during the British Raj. This provides an interesting acknowledgement of Ireland's inclusion in the British Empire, with Irish men upholding British Colonial power across the globe, whilst also being a reminder

¹⁵³ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 30.

¹⁵⁴ Panikos Panayi, 'Cheap Labour' in *Migrant City: A New History of London* (Yale University Press, 2017).

¹⁵⁵ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 124, 129.

¹⁵⁶ Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Middle Nation: Finding Our Feet.'

¹⁵⁷ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 56.

¹⁵⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 56-7.

of Ireland's own position under British rule.¹⁵⁹ Mac Amhlaigh was very dedicated to the Connolly Association, which maintained a staunch anti-colonial stance. Assessing the anti-colonial message of the Connolly Association's newspaper *The Irish Democrat* (to which Mac Amhlaigh regularly contributed) in the 1950's-60's, Evan Smith and Jimmy Wintermute state:

The aim of the newspaper's editors was to make clear in the minds of the readers the association between British colonial repression in Ireland and elsewhere within the British Empire, thereby high-lighting how struggles in different colonial contexts were linked.¹⁶⁰

Mac Amhlaigh's involvement in the Connolly Association provided another conduit through which he was encouraged to consider his Irish identity in a broader global context and to foster solidarity among former British colonies worldwide. Considering Khyber Brennan's position post-Irish independence and after his retirement from army service, the narrator mentions:

All the old gentry of the county – former British Army officers and the like – knew Khyber, and they never passed him on the street without giving a salute. If their memories did need jogging, Khyber wasn't beneath reminding them that he was always open to offers covering the price of a pint.¹⁶¹

These former officers, the wealthy landowners of the pre-independence gentry class, highlight how the British Army failed its Irish soldiers post-service, offering Khyber Brennan no more than a salute or, occasionally, 'covering the price of a pint.' These Irish men, who once were respected soldiers, are left unemployed, wasting their days in the pub alongside characters such as Packie Pugh, 'an unashamed waster who'd praise high heaven anyone who threw the slightest favour in his direction.'¹⁶² Mac Amhlaigh shows that the legacies of the British Empire were still present in Ireland in the 1950s through this sorry depiction of the retired soldier.

¹⁵⁹ For literature about Ireland's role in the British Empire, and particularly in India, see: Donald Harman Akenson, 'The Irish and Empire,' in *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (The Institute of Irish Studies, University of Belfast, 1996); Andy Bielenberg, 'Irish Emigration to the British Empire, 1700-1914,' in *The Irish Diaspora*, ed. Andy Bielenberg (Pearson Education, 2000); Michael Holmes, 'The Irish and India: Imperialism, Nationalism and Internationalism,' in *The Irish Diaspora*, ed. Andy Bielenberg (Pearson Education, 2000).

¹⁶⁰ Evan Smith and Jimmy Wintermute, "'Once It Was Ireland, Now It Is Kenya': Anti-Colonialism and Internationalism in the Pages of the Connolly Association's *Irish Democrat* in the 1950s–60s,' *Irish Studies Review* 32, no. 3 (2024): 407-408.

¹⁶¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 56.

¹⁶² Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 57.

Decentring Irishness

In Chapter One, when Niall meets her on the train, Nano is first presented as an unwilling exile:

She'd got a job in a hospital there and she was going to give it a go and see how she got on. It was only recently that she'd decided to leave Ireland. It wasn't that she'd any great hankering for England, she said, with a certain tinge of regret. There was a bit of a story behind this girl – she was someone who was emigrating almost against her will, Niall could tell.¹⁶³

Yet, when we are introduced to Nano's perspective in Chapter 3, after accepting the job in Norwold and before she leaves Ireland, the narrator tells us that, 'It was as if she had already left this place in her mind, there was no point having a row with anyone because she was no longer part of this community.'¹⁶⁴ In applying to the hospital, Nano moves on from home before she has even left. She shares the same almost predestined need to emigrate as her navy compatriot, who 'couldn't remember a time when he hadn't been keen to leave home; even when he'd still been at school, he couldn't wait to get out of Doire Leathan.'¹⁶⁵ This speaks to a recognised phenomenon in studies of Irish migration: that emigration became entirely normalised.¹⁶⁶ It becomes clear throughout the novel that, ultimately, Nano and Trevor share a sense of detachment from home and a similar sense of freedom as they build their lives in Britain.

Nano appears to be ahead of her time or enlightened, perhaps because she inherits Mac Amhlaigh's retrospective wisdom. As a practical and intelligent woman, she recognises that, while the circumstances are not ideal, emigrating to Norwold is undoubtedly the correct decision for her. Nano views emigration as a necessity rather than a desire. She wants to move beyond the limitations she faces in Ireland, particularly as an unmarried woman engaged to a second son. In documenting the cultural barriers facing Nano and her fiancé, Máirtín, Mac Amhlaigh highlights the specific circumstances that led many young Irish people to leave home for Britain in the 1950s. The reader receives a level of detail that extends beyond narratives of economic insecurity and unemployment, as the text articulates the exact issue: it would be improper for Nano to

¹⁶³ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 11-12.

¹⁶⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 21.

¹⁶⁵ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 105.

¹⁶⁶ Liam Ryan, 'Irish Emigration to Britain Since World War II,' in *Migrations: The Irish At Home and Abroad*, ed. Richard Kearney (Wolfhound Press, 1990); Donald Harman Akenson, 'Great Britain: The Place Nearest Home,' in *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (The Institute of Irish Studies, University of Belfast, 1996).

move into Máirtín's house with his sister and mother whilst his older brother remains in Britain.¹⁶⁷

In his seminal work on the Irish diaspora, Donald Harman Akenson strongly resists characterising diaspora members as unwilling exiles. When discussing the emigration of Irish women, he emphasises his stance on the subject even more firmly:

[...] I emphasized that it was historically inaccurate and unintentionally demeaning to see Irish emigrants as merely passive in the emigration process, as being unwilling exiles rather than as having been actively engaged in charting their own futures. That point must be re-emphasized here, because the view of the Irish as forced emigrants, passive before the fates, is doubly demeaning to women.

I repeat: women in the Irish diaspora made a conscious decision to emigrate, a volitional choice. That so many left is a clear indication that these women perceived a better future for themselves outside of Ireland, but this does not necessarily mean that they were right. Nor does the massive female outflow necessarily imply that things were bad in absolute terms for Irish women, but only that they believed things would be better for them elsewhere, a relative judgement.¹⁶⁸

This speaks directly to Nano's experience of emigration in the text. Though she is initially perceived as an unwilling exile, we discover that, in fact, '[...] Nano knew that she'd made up her mind the instant she read the advertisement: she'd already decided in her heart.'¹⁶⁹ There are no questions or debates for Nano pre-migration; the decision is made, and she leaves for Norwold shortly after.

It is impossible to compare Nano and Trevor's stories without recognising the gendered aspects of their narratives. While both characters are afforded greater freedom in exile, Nano's freedom lies more in discovering the independence to live on her own terms, including accepting her similarities with the other immigrant workers at the hospital. She is willing to leave Ireland itself and then to move beyond the insulation of the Irish community. Tony Murray has reflected on three texts that centre on Irish nurses in Britain: Mary Morris' diary from World War II, published as *A Very Private Diary* (rediscovered in 2014), Mary Hazard's autobiography *Sixty*

¹⁶⁷ Cowley, 'The Culture of Migration,' 28-29.

¹⁶⁸ Donald Harman Akenson, 'Women and the Irish Diaspora: The Great Unknown,' in *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*, (The Institute of Irish Studies, University of Belfast, 1996), 159.

¹⁶⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 20.

Years a Nurse (2015), and Maeve Kelly's novel *Florrie's Girls* (1989). In his assessment of the texts, he states: 'In all three, narrative provides a sense of time passing, conditions changing and characters evolving.'¹⁷⁰ This aligns with Nano's trajectory in *Exiles*; much like these other nurse characters, there is a sense that Nano is profoundly changed by her experience of emigration. Although she regularly grapples with moral and cultural conflicts in her new life, she ultimately lets go of her old self and relationships and embraces her new home and identity, accepting this evolution.

The young nurse defies her colleagues' expectation that she interact only with other Irish nurses and perform a version of Irishness she sees as supercilious. Instead, Nano contemplates her displaced colleagues' lives and experiences, drawing her own conclusions rather than accepting others' opinions.¹⁷¹ She does not abandon the Irish community and is particularly close with her roommate, Sheila O'Dwyer, who is from Cork. Yet she also enjoys positive relationships with English colleagues, such as her friend Hilda Jackson, and others who expand her worldview and satisfy her natural curiosity. This is ultimately typified by her relationship with the hospital's gardener, Julius Kuzleikas, which Mac Amhlaigh clearly champions.

Nano struggles to defend her identity as Trevor does so fervently. In one significant exchange in Chapter 5, she finds herself on the wrong side of the Irish clique after explaining to Jackson that she had moved to find work. The resulting argument between Nano and fellow Irish nurse Mary McDermott highlights several tensions and anxieties for the Irish emigrant community, the aforementioned tensions between Irish-speaking and non-Irish-speaking communities, as well as the difficulties in presenting independent Ireland as self-sufficient, whilst still acknowledging that they have left:

'[...] and what I want to know is this – why did you give that one the satisfaction of telling her there's no work back home?'

'Satisfaction? What are you on about?'

'Telling them there's no work in Ireland – that's the satisfaction! Have you any respect whatsoever for your own country?'

'Oh, for God's sake, don't you know as well as I do that there's no work at home, you fool? Isn't that the reason we're all working over here?' Nano had had enough of McDermott but the latter hadn't finished.

¹⁷⁰ Tony Murray, 'Writing Irish Nurses in Britain,' in *A History of Irish Working-Class Literature*, ed. Michael Pierce (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 208.

¹⁷¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 62.

‘Yeah but why would you tell them that? Why would you give that shower the satisfaction? Even if there were twice as many of us working over here, you should still tell them there’s plenty of work back home. Or maybe you’re not Irish, after all?’
‘By God, of course I am! I’m as Irish as *you*, at any rate. My Irish is better than my English; which is more than you can say!’¹⁷²

The tension continues through supper, where the protagonist finds herself at the mercy of sharp comments and gossip. The disillusionment experienced by Trevor’s navvying companions is also clearly present amongst the Irish nursing community; however, a girl from Mayo defends Nano and confronts the larger group for pretending that things at home are better than they are.¹⁷³ Nano also has a confidante and friend in Sheila O’Dwyer, who arrived in England first. After hearing about the argument, she explains to Nano the nuances of the performance of Irishness in displacement:

‘Oh,’ Sheila had countered, ‘believe me, it’s a major crime here to say anything that’s not one hundred per cent good about Ireland: you have to praise the place constantly! It’s like a madness that hits some people as soon as they get over here. If we didn’t know better, you’d swear that they’d been living in the land of plenty all their lives and that it was the best country in the world. But you know, as I’ve often said – and some of the English would say the same to you too when you’re talking to them in private – if things were so great back in Ireland, then why didn’t they stay there? You’d swear every Irishman was God’s gift, listening to those morons!’¹⁷⁴

This tension between Nano and her fellow Irish colleagues seems to come directly from an experience Mac Amhlaigh faced whilst working as a hospital orderly. He shares a similar anecdote in ‘Documenting the Fifties’:

[...] I was more open with the English than most of my fellow Irish were prepared to be and when I once made the, to me perfectly, sensible, admission that there was little employment in Ireland I was quickly told by those who worked with me that I was letting down the side. That was in my first job here as a ward orderly in a large hospital staffed mainly by Irish and Displaced Persons from countries like Poland, the Ukraine and the

¹⁷² Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 69, [original emphasis].

¹⁷³ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 71.

¹⁷⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 73.

Baltic States, and very soon I learned to curb my tongue rather than invite the censure of the Irish. On another occasion I put myself in bad odour by commenting on a row in an Irish dancehall which I had witnessed the night before; it was in the refectory, and there were some English nurses and orderlies present, and I was later accused of pandering to their prejudiced notions of the Irish as drunken brawlers. I should have kept quiet about the damned row and not be giving them ammunition!¹⁷⁵

This shared experience between the author and the character underscores the autofictional thread between them and foregrounds his sympathy for the young nurse in the text. It highlights how Nano's feelings of being an outsider amongst the Irish community, as well as amongst the English, stem directly from Mac Amhlaigh's own life and how both author and character had to learn how to 'perform' their Irishness in exile.

Mac Amhlaigh is very careful in *Exiles* to emphasise that neither Nano nor Trevor is keen to assimilate into British society. Trevor does not engage with English people at all; meanwhile, in Nano's narrative, English culture is often described as strange and different. In contrast, the cultures of other immigrant groups are more comparable to Nano's own. This is emphasised at the opening of Chapter 5:

Nano Mháire Coilm was very neat and particular about her work in the hospital. She didn't need anything explained to her more than once, and was always eager, an enthusiasm that was lacking among some of the younger local nurses. Some of them were so lazy and uninterested that Norwold Hospital was very lucky, Nano thought, that it wasn't entirely reliant on the English girls, but that plenty of immigrants worked there too. Some of these young local girls had the air of people who tried to get away without doing a stroke of work. Their attitude seemed to be that they were just in it for the money rather than for the job itself.¹⁷⁶

There is a sense that the immigrant nurses value their positions more, having shared experiences of hardship at home. By comparison, the young local girls take their jobs for granted, having not experienced the insecurity of unemployment or the difficulties of economic conditions, starting their careers in the post-war boom.

¹⁷⁵ Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties,' 10-11.

¹⁷⁶ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 60.

Intercultural connection

The Irish community at Norwold hospital is similarly insular to Trevor's. However, it is centred on a more general sense of Irish identity and less specific than the navy's Connemaran community. This leaves Nano on the periphery as an Irish speaker who refuses to conform to the narrative of Irish success and superiority. As Nano works alongside other immigrant workers in the hospital, she has more organic opportunities to interact with people who are not Irish, allowing Mac Amhlaigh to connect her feelings of displacement and instability with other staff who have left their home countries. Mac Amhlaigh demonstrates that, for Nano, beginning to find her feet at the hospital does not necessarily mean becoming 'more English', although she does lose the opportunity to speak in Irish. Instead, she becomes more accepting of her displacement and embraces her cultural experiences, including the hardships that led to her emigration. Paul White argues:

Migration [therefore] changes people and mentalities. New experiences result from the coming together of multiple influences and peoples, and these new experiences lead to altered or evolving representations of experience and of self-identity.¹⁷⁷

Nano's evolving representation of her identity, most significantly, allows her to connect with Lithuanian gardener Julius, her love interest later in the text. Mac Amhlaigh's championing of this cross-cultural relationship further emphasises that Nano's experiences are aligned with the author's feelings about how the Irish community should exist within Britain.

In *An Irish Navy*, when writing about working at the hospital, Mac Amhlaigh speaks fondly of a nurse he meets from Sligo named Nelly, though I could not find any references to her in his diaries. It seems clear she is the inspiration behind Nano, as he mentions her Lithuanian fiancé, with whom she then moves to Canada.¹⁷⁸ In *Exiles*, Nano moves to England still engaged to the hapless Máirtín, who has not yet married her, as his familial responsibilities and overbearing mother trap him. Nano's greatest struggle in her exile is facing the reality that Máirtín cannot provide her with the life she desires, and that he will never stand up to his mother, though she still tries to uphold the commitment she has made to him. Nano openly acknowledges that she does not love her life in Britain, in contrast to Trevor's insistence on the superiority of life in London. Her difficulties and struggles throughout the novel are more

¹⁷⁷ Paul White, 'Geography, Literature and Migration,' in *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration*, ed. Russell King, John Connell, and Paul White (Routledge, 1995), 1.

¹⁷⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *An Irish Navy*, 23,24,33.

internal, rooted in her sense of morality and Catholic identity, compared to the exploitation and isolation witnessed by Trevor.

Early in Chapter 8, once she has spent more time settling in to the hospital environment, Mac Amhlaigh pays close attention to Nano's feelings about her life, telling the reader: 'She felt a bit like a fish-out-of-water here, as if she'd landed in some strange limbo-land. Everything about Norwold was so different; she found the life here completely alien to her so that it was as if she had no business being there.'¹⁷⁹ This is reminiscent of the 'imaginary' people from 'another world' Trevor observes on the tube. However, where the navy dismisses them, Nano instead becomes very introspective about her position in the world:

Sometimes it seemed to Nano that her life had taken a completely different turn from the one she'd originally planned; and this frightened her most of all. What if everyone's fate was ordained, and this was the road that had been laid out for her since the very beginning of time! [...]. These thoughts frightened Nano and she did her best to push them aside and forget them whenever they came to mind. There'd been a good few nights recently when she'd gone to bed feeling down, something that wouldn't have happened if she'd stayed home.¹⁸⁰

Over the rest of the novel, she oscillates between feeling that 'she hadn't done badly by coming over to Norwold',¹⁸¹ and this same philosophical debate of free will and determinism, which causes her great anxiety.¹⁸² This anxiety eventually represents a moment of connection between Nano and Julius, when she realises Julius has experienced similar feelings.¹⁸³ The difficulty of her work and her dedication to her patients provide a welcome distraction from her internal turmoil; indeed, shortly after, the narrator tells us:

It was the work that proved her salvation; if it wasn't for working, she'd have gone mad. She flung herself into her work every day with great enthusiasm, even if it was only brushing the floor or collecting the cutlery or plates after patients' meals. Everything she did, she did as conscientiously and as thoroughly as she could; her work had taken on an almost ascetic aspect.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 118.

¹⁸⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 118.

¹⁸¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 202.

¹⁸² Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 236.

¹⁸³ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 217.

¹⁸⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 118.

This passage resembles the descriptions of the navvies in London. Nano's work becomes her 'salvation' much in the way the labourers experience a 'sudden conversion to a new religion,' after moving to Britain. Once more, Mac Amhlaigh emphasises the centrality of work. However, unlike Trevor, for whom work comes before everything, Nano sees it as a welcome distraction from her thoughts and anxieties about her position in the world.

It takes until the very last page of the book for Nano to accept that she has moved beyond Máirtín and allow herself to give in fully to her feelings for Julius. Mac Amhlaigh presents Nano's infidelity with Julius sympathetically, and the connection between the two characters is portrayed as pure, natural and unavoidable, despite Nano's best attempts to resist it. The narrator describes Máirtín's goodness and justness, but also emphasises Nano's overwhelming love for Julius, further emphasising the fated nature of their relationship.¹⁸⁵ Nano reflects on Julius' manners, kindness, and neatness, contrasting them with other Irish characters who pressure her to drink or whom she sees as wild or rowdy.¹⁸⁶ Thus, though he causes Nano to commit a sin and be unfaithful to Máirtín, Julius becomes the character in Britain who is most aligned with Nano's own moral code and principles. Máirtín represents the community in Ireland that Nano has grown beyond. He is well-intentioned, and Nano clearly holds great affection for him. However, it is clear that he limits her by not marrying her, being happy to allow his mother to dictate the timeline of his relationship. Nano desires to move forward and build a bright future for herself. She stands out among the other Irish nurses at the hospital for her willingness to embrace change and truly move beyond the life she has known.

I argue that Nano's ability to find happiness in Britain stems from embracing her position as an immigrant in Norwold, rather than clinging to her Irishness as the defining aspect of her identity. As an Irish migrant in Norwold, she finds more in common with Julius, who has been displaced from his home in the Soviet Union, than with Máirtín, who typifies the static world she has left behind. Mac Amhlaigh presents Nano as uniquely sensitive to the other immigrant communities she works alongside at the hospital. The narrator recognises the hospital staff's diversity, listing: 'Italians, Poles and Germans, in addition to people from Eastern European countries that Nano had never heard of.'¹⁸⁷ Although Nano relies on Sheila O'Dwyer for companionship and guidance at the hospital, she formulates her own opinion on her other colleagues:

¹⁸⁵ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 212, 235.

¹⁸⁶ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 124.

¹⁸⁷ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 62.

The English hadn't the slightest respect either for these displaced persons or DPs as they were called, Sheila claimed. Neither had the Irish, she said, even though they'd no more claim on England than the others. [...] she was wrong about the Eastern European girls, anyway, apart from anything else, Nano thought. Even a blind man could tell, from their polite and well-spoken behaviour, that they hadn't been brought up in old shacks [...]. They had the look of people who'd been fairly well-off once but who'd come down in the world – and this wasn't even taking into account whatever happened to them during the war. Indeed, Nano felt that these women were far more easy-going than were many of the Irish women working in the hospital, some of whom carried their Irishness about with them as though it were a challenge.¹⁸⁸

Even before she meets Julius, Nano feels a particular kinship with her Eastern European colleagues, one that is not shared by her Irish companion.

Nano's relationship with Julius is built on a sense of mutual understanding, clearly tied to their shared experience of leaving home. Mac Amhlaigh explores the connection between the two characters' experiences in Chapter 12, when Julius shows Nano photographs from home:

The photos were old and faded, and Julius' mother and father were in one of them. They were country people, his father in a hat and a long-sleeved vest, exactly the same type as one would see back in Connemara; his mother was a short and stocky woman, her hair covered in a headscarf.¹⁸⁹

Although Lithuania and its history are distant from Nano, a sense of shared humanity is evident in the resemblance of Julius's parents to people she knows. The final photo Julius shows Nano affects her most deeply: 'The last photo had been taken in the countryside as well, and showed a group of young people standing in front of a large haystack. Nano felt an ache of sadness. It reminded her of home.'¹⁹⁰ This moment of homesickness and familiarity contrasts with the sentiment Nano felt at the beginning of the text, that she was no longer a part of her community at home, emphasising her liminal condition. Nano's sense of sadness is amplified by the fact that she seems to have nothing to show Julius in return; these photographs, in their familiarity, become a tender, but valuable, connection between the two young immigrants, sharing the pain of what they have both lost. This moment is made all the more poignant when, after fully

¹⁸⁸ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 62-63.

¹⁸⁹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 216.

¹⁹⁰ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 216.

embracing her feelings for Julius and dancing with him at the Christmas party, the narrator tells us: ‘Somehow, Nano felt like she’d come home.’¹⁹¹

Nic Eoin includes *Deoraithe* in her column ‘Litríocht Mhionlaigh Agus / Nó Litríocht Dhomanda?’, an assessment of Irish-language literature on the global literary stage. She highlights Nano and Julius’ relationship as a specific representation of how, by living in England, Irish people were exposed to other migrant cultures and, consequently, learned about other experiences of displacement, noting that it is through reflecting on Julius’ experience that Nano also considers Ireland’s place of neutrality in World War II, and what it meant to be Irish in both a post-independence and post-war context.¹⁹² This highlights how Nano’s connections and experiences relate to Mac Amhlaigh’s re-evaluation of his identity in a global context following his own emigration.

In his 1951 diary, when working in the hospital in Northampton shortly after emigrating, Mac Amhlaigh notes a particular conversation he had with a Ukrainian roommate, ‘Michael Dmiduk’, whilst they quarantined with chickenpox. The two discuss their home countries and experiences of migration. He writes:

Cloisreán ag labhairt beárta d’innis sé go leor don faoin a saoil – tá sé imigire con mbaile o bí sé an 11, bí sé piosa i mBuchenwald con mar i. Tá sé 3 bliain annseo.

He told me in English a lot about his life – he had been an immigrant from his home since he was 11, he spent a bit of time in Buchenwald. He has been here three years.

He also writes:

D’innis mé go leor do faoi stair na hEireann cuir iontas air.

I told him about some Irish history, it surprised him.¹⁹³

This interaction also features in *An Irish Navy*, where Mac Amhlaigh elaborates on the situation:

¹⁹¹ Mac Amhlaigh, *Exiles*, 301.

¹⁹² Nic Eoin, ‘Litríocht Mhionlaigh Agus / Nó Litríocht Dhomanda?’, 12.

¹⁹³ Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, *Diary*, 1951, manuscript, in Irish, MS 32,596/21, *Diaries and Literary Notebooks of Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 1950-1988*, National Library of Ireland.

There is a very nice young boy in this ward also, his name is Nicholas Dimidvik and he comes from the Ukraine. You'd think he was from Connemara to listen to him talking. He left home when he was eleven and he has never been back there since. He spent some time in the concentration camps at Buchenwald and Dachau. Like most of the other D. P's that I met since I came here, he's not too keen at all on this country and, like the rest of them also, he's always complaining.¹⁹⁴

This cultural exchange between two men allows them to discuss their homes whilst learning about one another. They share similar feelings of displacement despite initially being ignorant of each other's relative experiences of conflict and instability. They live in Britain and work together at the hospital, serving as a conduit that enables this cultural exchange in both directions. It is clear from this archival evidence, therefore, that Nano's curiosity and her experience of finding connection and community with Julius is one that reflected Mac Amhlaigh's own experiences. Mac Amhlaigh notes that the Ukrainian man could have been 'from Connemara to listen to him talking,' highlighting the connection between the two countries much in the same way Nano does, seeing familiarities between Julius' country life and her own.

This interaction between Mac Amhlaigh and his roommate also highlights his naivety coming from Ireland, something he once again shares with the characters in *Exiles*. He was clearly well-versed in Ireland's history. Still, his mention of the other man's time in the notorious Buchenwald labour camp reads as being somewhat dismissive or apathetic, despite it being clear that Mac Amhlaigh is very interested in understanding his roommate's experiences. The difference between this early interaction from Mac Amhlaigh's time in Britain and the voice we hear in his later work, including 'Documenting the Fifties' and 'The Middle Nation' articles, where he calls for his community to become more open-minded and less insular, and the trajectory of Nano's narrative in *Exiles* emphasises how his own experience as an Irish emigrant expanded the writer's worldview over time.¹⁹⁵

Mac Amhlaigh's inclusion of characters across all three protagonists' stories who are either from or have experienced other world cultures emphasises the importance he places on understanding Irishness in a global perspective. Nano's open curiosity and interest in the people around her, compared to Trevor's dismissal and lack of engagement with his own curiosity about them, foregrounds how Mac Amhlaigh contrasts the two characters to build the novel's thesis. Mac Amhlaigh's personal interest in languages and culture, alongside his commitment to socialist

¹⁹⁴ Mac Amhlaigh, *An Irish Navy*, 10.

¹⁹⁵ Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties.'; Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Middle Nation.'; Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Middle Nation: Social Life and the Emigrant.'; Mac Amhlaigh, 'The Middle Nation: Finding Our Feet.'

politics, led him to actively encourage a more adaptable and open-minded culture amongst the Irish in Britain, both in his journalism and, significantly, in *Exiles*. This is shown in the novel through Nano's embracing of her immigrant identity and her eventual finding a sense of home in her connection with Julius.

Conclusion

In his assessment of place and identity, Iain Chambers states:

To come from elsewhere, from ‘there’ and not ‘here’ and hence to be simultaneously ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the situation at hand, is to live at the intersections of histories and memories, experiencing both their preliminary dispersal and their subsequent translation into new, more extensive arrangements along emerging routes. It is simultaneously to encounter the languages of powerlessness and the potential intimations of heterotopic futures. This drama, rarely freely chosen, is also the drama of the stranger. Cut off from the homelands of tradition, experiencing a constantly challenged identity, the stranger is perpetually required to make herself at home in an interminable discussion between a scattered historical inheritance and a heterogeneous present.¹⁹⁶

Mac Amhlaigh dedicated his writing career to capturing, quite literally, this intersection between history and memory. His work inherits its ambivalent approach to migration from the recognition, identified by Chambers in another context, that an immigrant's life is always informed by the struggles they have faced in their migration, while recognising the potential of their future. Mac Amhlaigh, having his own experience of emigration, fully accepts the in-betweenness and liminality of his community's position in Britain, and emphasises that it is the very embracing of this ‘flexible, contingent migrant identity’¹⁹⁷ noted by Harte, which allows people to find comfort in their sense of Irishness in exile.

Exiles, as a text, is part story, part memory and part manifesto. In exploring how Trevor and Nano negotiate their Irish identity as workers in Britain, Mac Amhlaigh uses his own emigration to Britain to articulate in the novel the conclusions he draws from a life lived between Ireland and Britain, as both writer and labourer. These conclusions, as this thesis presents, revolve largely around finding a sense of home in displacement without compromising a strong sense of Irish identity. Aligned with Harte's recognition of the tension in Irish emigrant literature between an ‘originary’ Irish identity and a sense of migrant identity, Nano and Trevor both struggle to understand their Irishness in Britain.¹⁹⁸ They negotiate this struggle in very disparate ways, ultimately embodying this recognised tension in their approaches to their lives, with Nano

¹⁹⁶ Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (Routledge, 1994), 6.

¹⁹⁷ Harte, “‘You Want to be a British Paddy?,” 234.

¹⁹⁸ Harte, “‘You Want to be a British Paddy?,” 234.

embracing her immigrant identity and Trevor reluctant to let go of his masculine ideals. It becomes even clearer when *Exiles* is analysed alongside Mac Amhlaigh's journalism and diaries that the writer sees the openness and curiosity in Nano's approach, understanding her sense of Irishness in the context of also being an immigrant in Britain, as the more impactful way of finding this sense of home.

In the novel, Mac Amhlaigh's reflections on his own experience shape three distinct paths for its three protagonists, while also highlighting the legacies and histories of an overlooked community of Irish immigrants in Britain, often remembered as the 'forgotten' or 'lost' generation. Niall's story emphasises that emigration was not a choice but a necessity for many of the young people who took the boat in the mid-twentieth century. Trevor highlights the rough, exploitative work that many young Irish men faced on the worksites of a country rebuilding, and Nano represents the hard work of invisible immigrant women in British institutions such as the NHS. By foregrounding these central figures of post-war Irish emigration to Britain, Mac Amhlaigh presents a work that speaks not only to his own legacy as an author and journalist but also to that of his long-exploited community, many of whom have faced loneliness and isolation in their old age.¹⁹⁹

Patrick Duffy notes that:

Irish writers of fiction for the most part seem to have abandoned their emigrant characters at the boat. They disappear silently over the horizon, out of sight, out of mind, out of the story. [...]. And so the irony is that in a century of enormous out-migration, these migrants made relatively little impression on the literary world.²⁰⁰

Exiles is an examination of the Irish community both as emigrants from Ireland and, crucially, as immigrants in Britain. Throughout, Mac Amhlaigh reflects on this dual positioning and its impact on the identities of all three characters. The novel stands out as a work of fiction that addresses this irony recognised by Duffy. *Exiles* opens with its characters taking the boat and, consequently, follows them on their journeys, navigating the complex lives of the Irish in Britain. Duffy highlights Edna O'Brien, Sean O'Faolain and Joseph O'Connor as writers who experienced emigration themselves and 'who make occasional excursions into the emigrants' new

¹⁹⁹ Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea, and Carmel Quinlan, eds., *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s* (Mercier Press, 2004); Paul Rouse and Niamh O'Connor, *My Heart is Still There*, <https://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/1030-emigration-once-again/139200-lost-generation/>.

²⁰⁰ Patrick Duffy, 'Literary Reflections on Irish Migration in The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,' in *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration*, ed. Russell King, John Connell, and Paul White (Routledge, 1995), 33.

world in their works.²⁰¹ As is the case elsewhere, Mac Amhlaigh's contribution, being only accessible in Irish for so long, remains unrecognised. By examining Mac Amhlaigh's attempt to address this lack of representation of the Irish community living in Britain, I hope to have helped reintroduce the writer and the novel to anglophone Irish literary study, where they have historically been so underrepresented. I also hope I have continued Mac Amhlaigh's legacy, remembering the history of the Irish in Britain in the post-war era and their lasting impact on contemporary British and Irish society.

²⁰¹ Patrick Duffy, 'Literary Reflections on Irish Migration in The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,' 33.

Works consulted

- Arrowsmith, Aidan. 'Inside-Out: Literature, Cultural Identity and Irish Migration to England.' In *Comparing Postcolonial Literatures*, edited by Ashok Bery and Patricia Murray. Macmillan, 2000.
- Akenson, Donald Harman. *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*. The Institute of Irish Studies, University of Belfast, 1996.
- Anker, Elizabeth. *Fictions of Dignity*. Cornell University Press, 2012.
- Beatty, Aidan. *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Murphy*. Grove Press, 1957.
- Bery, Ashok, and Murray, Patricia. 'Introduction.' In *Comparing Postcolonial Literatures*, edited by Ashok Bery and Patricia Murray. Macmillan, 2000.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 2012.
- Casey, Edward S. *Getting Back into Place*. Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Casey, Edward S. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. University of California Press, 1997.
- Cairns, David, and Richards, Shaun. *Writing Ireland*. Manchester University Press, 1988.
- Carroll, Clare. 'Introduction.' In *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, edited by Clare Carroll and Patricia King. Cork University Press, 2003.
- de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall. University of California Press, 1984.
- Chambers, Iain. *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*. Routledge, 1994.
- Clear, Caitríona. "'Too Fond of Going': Female Emigration and Change for Women in Ireland, 1946-1961.' In *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s*, edited by Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea, and Carmel Quinlan. Mercier Press, 2004.
- Cleary, Joe. 'Introduction: Ireland and Modernity,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, edited by Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Cleary, Joe. 'Misplaced Ideas? Colonialism, Location and Dislocation in Irish Studies.' In *Theorizing Ireland*, edited by Claire Connolly. Palgrave Macmillan 2003.
- Cleary, Joe. 'Postcolonial writing in Ireland.' In *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, volume 1, edited by Ato Quayson. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Connolly, Tracey. 'Emigration from Ireland to Britain During the Second World War.' In *The Irish Diaspora*, edited by Andy Bielenberg. Pearson Education, 2000.
- Convery, David. 'Writing and Theorising the Irish Working Class.' In *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*, edited by Michael Pierse. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Cowley, Ultan. *The Men Who Built Britain: A History of the Irish Navy*. Wolfhound Press, 2001.
- Davis, Graham. 'The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939.' In *The Irish Diaspora*, ed. Andy Bielenberg. Pearson Education, 2000.

Deane, Seamus. 'Dumbness and Eloquence: A Note on English as We Write it in Ireland.' In *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, edited by Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson, and Edward Said. University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

Deane, Seamus. 'Introduction.' In *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, edited by Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson, and Edward Said. University of Minnesota Press, 1990.

Delaney, Enda. 'Placing Postwar Irish Migration to Britain in a Comparative European Perspective, 1945-1981.' In *The Irish Diaspora*, edited by Andy Bielenberg. Pearson Education, 2000.

Delaney, Enda. *The Irish in Post-War Britain*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

Delaney, Enda. 'The Vanishing Irish? The Exodus from Ireland in the 1950s.' In *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s*, edited by Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea, and Carmel Quinlan. Mercier Press, 2004.

Delaney, Paul. "'A system that inflicts suffering upon the many': Early twentieth-century working-class fiction.' In *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*, edited by Michael Pierse. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Devlin, Anne. *After Easter*. Faber and Faber, 1996.

Duffy, Patrick. 'Literary Reflections on Irish Migration in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.' In *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration*, edited by Russell King, John Connell, and Paul White. Routledge, 1995.

Fallon, Brian. 'Reflecting on Ireland in the 1950s.' In *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s*, ed. Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea, and Carmel Quinlan. Mercier Press, 2004.

Fitzpatrick, D. *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*. The Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, 1985.

Flannery, Eoin. *Ireland and Postcolonial Studies*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

Frawley, Oona, ed. *Memory Ireland: History and Modernity*, volume 1. University of Syracuse Press, 2012.

Frawley, Oona, ed. *Memory Ireland*, volume 2. University of Syracuse Press, 2012.

Frawley, Oona, ed. *Memory Ireland*, volume 3. University of Syracuse Press, 2014.

Focloir Gaeilge-Béarla, edited by Niall Ó Donail. An Gúm, 1977,
<https://www.teanglann.ie/en/>.

Grey, Breda. 'From 'Ethnicity' to 'Diaspora': 1980s Emigration and 'Multicultural' London.' In *The Irish Diaspora*, edited by Andy Bielenberg. Pearson Education, 2000.

Halpin, Brendan. 'Who are the Irish in Britain? Evidence from Large-scale Surveys.' In *The Irish Diaspora*, edited by Andy Bielenberg. Pearson Education, 2000.

Harte, Liam. 'Introduction: Migration and Autobiographical Authorship.' In *The Literature of the Irish in Britain 1725-2001*, edited by Liam Harte. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

- Harte, Liam. “‘You want to be a British Paddy?’: The Anxiety of Identity in Post-war Irish Migrant Writing.’ In *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s*, edited by Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O’Shea, and Carmel Quinlan. Mercier Press, 2004.
- Hentz, Jean-Philippe. ‘Gaelic London and London Gaels in Dónall Mac Amhlaigh’s *An Irish Navy*.’ In *Irish Writing London: Volume 2: Post-War to the Present*, edited by Tom Herron. Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Herron, Tom. ‘Introduction: The London Irish- Insiders/Outsiders.’ In *Irish Writing London: Volume 2: Post-War to the Present*, edited by Tom Herron. Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Hickman, Mary J. *Religion, Class and Identity: The State, The Catholic Church and the Education of the Irish in Britain*. Aldershot, 1995.
- Hogan, Jeremiah J. *The English Language in Ireland*. McGrath Publishing Co., 1970.
- Huggan, Graham. *Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the Future of Postcolonial Studies*. Liverpool University Press, 2008.
- Hutton, Seán. ‘Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, 1926-1989: An Appreciation of the Man and his Writings.’ *Irish Studies in Britain*, no.14 (1989) 5-6.
- Hutton, Seán. ‘Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall Peadar,’ *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/mac-amhlaigh-donall-peadar-a4986>.
- Innes, C.L. ‘Postcolonial Studies and Ireland.’ In *Comparing Postcolonial Literatures*, edited by Ashok Bery and Patricia Murray. Macmillan, 2000.
- Keane, John B. *The Contractors*. Mercier Press, 1993.
- Kellman, Stephen. *The Translingual Imagination*. University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
- Kelly, Aaron. *Twentieth Century Irish Literature: A Reader’s Guide to Essential Criticism*. Palgrave Macmillan 2008.
- Kelly, Maeve. *Florry’s Girls*. Black Staff Press, 1991.
- Kenner, Hugh. *A Colder Eye: The Modern Irish Writers*. Allen Lane, 1983.
- Kenner, Hugh. *Joyce’s Voices*. Faber & Faber, 1978.
- Keogh, Dermot. ‘Introduction: The Vanishing Irish.’ In *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s*, edited by Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O’Shea, and Carmel Quinlan. Mercier Press, 2004.
- Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*. Vintage Books, 1996.
- Kincaid, Andrew. *Postcolonial Dublin: Imperial Legacies And The Built Environment*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- Laird, Heather. ‘Writing Working-Class Irish Women.’ In *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*, edited by Michael Pierse. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Lele, Veerendra. “‘It’s Not Really a Nickname, It’s a Method’: Local Names, State Intimates, and Kinship Register in the Irish ‘Gaeltacht.’” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 19, no.1 (2009): 101–16.

- Lennon, Joseph. 'Irish Orientalism: An Overview.' In *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, edited by Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson, and Edward Said. University of Minnesota Press, 1990.
- Lynch, Claire. *Irish Autobiography: Stories of Self in the Narrative of a Nation*. Peter Lang, 2009.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall. *An Irish Navy: Diary of an Exile*. Translated by Valentin Iremonger. The Collins Press, 2003.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall. *Deoraithe*. An Clóchomhar, 2009.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Donall. *Diaries and Literary Notebooks of Donall Mac Amhlaigh, 1950-1988*. Manuscript collection, in Irish. National Library of Ireland.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall. 'Documenting the Fifties.' *Irish Studies in Britain*, no.14 (1989): 7-13.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall. *Exiles*. Translated by Mícheál Ó hAodha. Parthian, 2020.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall. *Schnitzer O'Shea*. Brandon Book Publishers, 1987.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall. 'The Gaeltacht in Exile – A Report from "Over There."' *The Irish Times*. 30 July, 1970. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall. 'The Middle Nation.' *The Irish Times*. October 14th, 1970. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall. 'The Middle Nation: Finding Our Feet.' *The Irish Times*. October 16th, 1970. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall. 'The Middle Nation: Social Life and the Emigrant.' *The Irish Times*. October 15th, 1970. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
- Mac Amhlaigh, Dónall. 'The Vanishing Irish.' *The Irish Times*. March 29th, 1980. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
- Marx, Karl. 'Outline of a Report on the Irish Question to the Communist Education Association of German Workers in London, 16th December 1867.' In *Ireland and the Irish Question*. Progress Publishers, 1971.
- McCafferty, Owen. *The Absence of Women*. Faber and Faber, 2010.
- McCrea, Barry. *Languages of the Night*. Yale University Press, 2015.
- McGahern, John. *The Leavetaking*. Faber and Faber, 1971.
- McWilliams, Ellen. *Women and Exile in Contemporary Irish Fiction*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Merrifield, Andy. *Dialectical Urbanism: Social Struggles in the Capitalist City*. Monthly Review Press, 2002.
- Miller, Kerby A. *Emigrants and Exiles*. Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Mulvihill, Margaret. *St Patrick's Daughter*. Sceptre, 1994.
- Murray, Tony. *London Irish fictions: Narrative, Diaspora and identity*. Liverpool University Press, 2014.

- Murray, Tony. 'Writing Irish Nurses in Britain.' In *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*, edited by Michael Pierse. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Newell, Úna. 'Poverty and the Irish Language.' In *The West Must Wait: County Galway and the Irish Free State*. Manchester University Press, 2015.
- Ní Dhonnchadha, Aisling, and Nic Eoin, Máirín. 'Ar an gCoigríoch: Migration and Identity in Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Irish-Language Literature.' *The Irish Review*, no. 44 (2012): 60–74.
- Nic Eoin, Máirín. 'Idir Dhá Chomhairle/ between Two Minds: Interculturality in Literary Criticism in Irish.' *Field Day Review*, (2008): 216–213.
- Nic Eoin, Máirín. 'Litríocht Mhionlaigh Agus / Nó Litríocht Dhomanda?' *Combar* 75, no. 2 (2015): 12–16.
- O'Leary, Philip. *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival 1881-1921: Ideology and Innovation*. Penn State University Press, 1994.
- de Nie, Michael. *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.
- Nolan, Emer. "Postcolonial Literary Studies, Nationalism, and Feminist Critique in Contemporary Ireland." *Éire-Ireland*, no.1 (2007): 336–361.
- Ó Conaire, Pádraic. *Exile*. Peter Owen, 2009.
- O'Keefe, Gráinne. 'The 2001 Census To Tick or Not To Tick: The Existence of an Irish Ethnic Identity in England. *Études Irlandaises*, no.31 (2006): 169–181.
- O'Keefe-Vigneron, Gráinne. 'The Irish in Multicultural London: The Fight for Recognition as the Other.' *Middle Ground: Journal of Literary and Cultural Encounters* 1, no.1 (2007): 12–19.
- Ó Tuathaigh, Gearóid. 'Language, Ideology and National Identity.' In *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, edited by Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Panayi, Panikos. *Migrant City: A New History of London*. Yale University Press, 2021.
- Paul, Kathleen. 'A Case of Mistaken Identity: The Irish in Postwar Britain.' *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 49 (1996): 116–42.
- Paulin, Tom. *Ireland and the English Crisis*. Bloodaxe, 1987.
- Pierse, Michael. "'An sinne a bhí sa chónra?": Writing Death on the Margins in Twentieth-Century Irish Working-Class Writing.' In *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*, edited by Michael Pierse. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Pierse, Michael. 'Introduction.' In *A History of Irish Working-Class Writing*, edited by Michael Pierse. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Popoviciu, Liviu, Haywood, Chris, and Mac an Ghaill, Máirtín. 'Migrating Masculinities: The Irish Diaspora in Britain.' *Irish Studies Review* 14, no.2, (2006): 169–187.
- Redmond, Jennifer. 'Brave Enough to Fight? Masculinity, Migration and the Irish Revolution.' *Irish Studies Review* 29, no. 2 (2021): 193–211.

- Roche, Billy. *Poor Beasts in the Rain*. Nick Hern Books, 1990.
- Ryan, James. 'Inadmissible Departures: Why Did the Emigrant Experience Feature so Infrequently in the Fiction of the Mid-Twentieth Century?' In *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s*, edited by Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea, and Carmel Quinlan. Mercier Press, 2004.
- Ryan, Liam. 'Irish Emigration to Britain Since World War II.' In *Migrations: The Irish At Home and Abroad*, edited by Richard Kearney. Wolfhound Press, 1990.
- Said, Edward. 'Yeats and Decolonisation.' In *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, edited by Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson, and Edward Said. University of Minnesota Press, 1990.
- Sayad, Abdelmalek. *The Suffering of the Immigrant*. Polity, 2004.
- Scully, Marc. 'BIFFOs, Jackeens and Dagenham Yanks: County Identity, "Authenticity" and the Irish Diaspora.' *Irish Studies Review* 21, no.2 (2013): 143-163.
- Sorohan, Seán. *Irish London during the Troubles*. Irish Academic Press, 2012.
- Smith, Evan, and Wintermute, Jimmy. "'Once It Was Ireland, Now It Is Kenya": Anti-Colonialism and Internationalism in the Pages of the Connolly Association's *Irish Democrat* in the 1950s–60s.' *Irish Studies Review* 32, no. 3 (2024): 407–431.
- Smyth, Gerry. *Decolonisation and Criticism: The Construction of Irish Literature*. Pluto Press, 1998.
- Smyth, Gerry. *The Novel and the Nation: Studies in the New Irish Fiction*. Pluto Press, 1997.
- Walter, Bronwen. 'Exploring Diaspora Space: Entangled Irish/English Genealogies.' In *Ireland: Space, Text, Time*, edited by Liam Harte, Yvonne Whelan, and Patrick Crotty. The Liffey Press, 2005.
- Woolley, Agnes. *Contemporary Asylum Narratives*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- White, Paul. 'Geography, Literature and Migration.' In *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration*, edited by Russell King, John Connell, and Paul White. Routledge, 1995.
- Willis, Rosalind. 'Where are the Irish in Research on Ethnic Health Inequalities in Britain? A State-of-the-Art Literature Review.' *Sociology of Health and Illness* 7, no.1 (2025).
- Wills, Clair. 'Realism and the Irish Immigrant: Documentary, Fiction, and Postwar Irish Labor.' *Modern Language Quarterly* 73, no.3 (2012): 373–394.
- Workman, Simon. 'Maev Kelly: Women, Ireland, and the Aesthetics of Radical Writing.' *Irish University Review* 49, no.2 (2019): 304-321.
- Williams, Martin. 'Ancient Mythology and Revolutionary Ideology in Ireland, 1878-1916,' *The Historical Journal* 26, no.2 (1983): 307-28.